THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF MARITIME HISTORY

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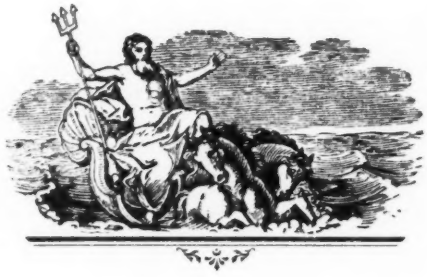

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BOSTON *is the heart of New England and although sometimes I wonder if it does not have a serious cardiac condition, nevertheless, if it did not exist, life in New England would be almost entirely of a rural nature. As the great commercial city of the region, it is also by far its greatest port, and certainly up until the mid-nineteenth century the commerce of the port was responsible for the life and growth of the city.*

Because Boston is a product of the sea, we feel justified in mentioning two recent books about the Hub, even though they are not strictly maritime history. The author of the first needs no introduction to readers of THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE. *Walter Muir Whitehill, still Senior Editor of the organization, was the Managing Editor for the first ten years of this journal's existence. Harvard University Press has recently published his latest work,* Boston A Topographical History. *This book, which to my mind is the finest thing of its kind ever done, shows the growth and changes in the old city since the time the Reverend William Blaxton settled on the Shawmut Peninsula in* 1623, *to the present-day plans for the new Prudential center. One definitely maritime aspect of these changes is in the coast line. The numerous illustrations and maps graphically supplement the text and one can see finger-like wharves projecting, then being filled in between, coves and shallows*

being filled until the peninsula that was nearly an island has developed into the broad tongue of land on which the city stands. This is a book that can be read for pleasure as well as used for reference.

Beyond the fact that he approves of lobsters and fish dinners and was inspired by the view from Nahant, there is little meat for the maritime historian in Chiang Yee's The Silent Traveller in Boston, *also just out under the Norton imprint, but it is an enchanting book which should not be passed up. The ancient port appears in a new perspective when seen through Chinese eyes. Facets of our lives so familiar that we never think about them become the strange customs of an alien race worthy of remark. Chiang Yee has a delightful style and sense of humor.*

All of our subscribers will be pleased to know that the raise in subscription rate last year, plus the generous gifts of a number of friends, has made it possible for the NEPTUNE *to break even for the first time in many years. We should also like to draw to your attention, that the supplements for* 1959 *have been reprinted as a picture book which sells for* $1.00, *or in lots of* 25 *at a* 40 *per cent discount.*

For the benefit of librarians I should like to announce that arrangements have been made with University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, for the microfilming of THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE *for sale to libraries that already subscribe to the regular edition. They can also supply full-sized enlargements of single pages if these are lacking in sets that need binding and where back numbers are out of print.*

ERNEST S. DODGE

Peabody Museum of Salem

The History of Flat Holm Lighthouse

With some account of the island and of the Bristolians associated with the lighthouse during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

BY CAPTAIN W. R. CHAPLIN

THE earliest lights of the relatively modern lighthouse system on the English coast, which may be said to have commenced in the early years of the seventeenth century, were on the east and south coasts of the country and it was not until over a hundred years later that a light was first proposed for the Bristol Channel.

This is somewhat surprising considering the already important and steadily increasing trade of Bristol with North America and the West Indies, and that the ships engaged in it having contended with the perils of the North Atlantic and a doubtful landfall were faced with the dangers and difficult navigation of the eastern part of the Bristol Channel, with as yet no seamarks or aids to navigation where, for many miles before reaching the River Avon, to rocks and shoals were added all the hazards arising from the strongest tidal streams to be met with anywhere on the southern coasts of the country.

The principal dangers in the approaches to Bristol are the two islands, Flat Holm and Steep Holm, lying in a narrowing channel, only a little over two miles between them, and the islands surrounded by rocks and shoals, particularly the Wolves Rocks, Mackenzie Shoal, Centre Ledge, and New Patch. Over these rocks and shoals the tidal stream runs with great force, and in the channel between the islands as much as three to four knots at spring tides. It was here that during gales or fog many ships were wrecked, with accompanying loss of life, as well as the financial adventure and effort of a long voyage, when so near to their destination.

These islands, Flat Holm and Steep Holm are, geologically, a continuation or outlying fragment of the Mendip Hills of Somerset.[1] Steep Holm, rising 240 feet above sea level is the more imposing of the two but otherwise is of no interest. Flat Holm is larger in area and rises gradually to a

[1] F. A. Knight, *The Seaboard of Mendip*.

height of 65 feet at its southeastern end, where the lighthouse is the island's only conspicuous feature.

The history of the islands has been recorded elsewhere, but it may be noted that whereas Steep Holm has been only occasionally inhabited, Flat Holm has been in continuous occupation for centuries. In early times there was a monastery, the site of which is marked on present-day Ordnance Survey Maps although no remains of the monastic buildings have survived. A pharos is said to have existed there in ancient times, which is not improbable, as such warnings to mariners were frequently maintained at monasteries established on isolated islands and headlands. It is recorded that in ancient times lead-mining operations were carried on at Flat Holm, but to what extent is not known; they were, however, resumed in a small way in the eighteenth century although not very profitably.

The need of a light on Flat Holm had been discussed for years by the leading shipmasters and by the members of the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol, but it was not until 1733 that John Elbridge, one of the senior members of the Society and a prominent merchant of the city sent a petition to Trinity House setting forth the dangers to navigation in the Bristol Channel and the general desire for a light on the island. He had, however, already made some unofficial reference to the subject several years before, as in addition to his mercantile interests he was the collector of the Trinity House light dues for the port of Bristol, and in a letter to him in January 1730, from John Whormby, Secretary of the Trinity House, answering some question about light dues, a postscript asks: 'Pray have you anything new of the projected Light on Flat Holm.'[2]

In reply to his petition Elbridge was told very briefly that no general application had been made for the light. By this was meant a petition signed by a substantial number of merchants of the port and stating the tolls they were prepared to pay, without which no application to the crown for a patent would be successful, nor would there be a fund for its maintenance under the then existing system for the upkeep of coast lights. At the same time the Corporation, always jealous of its oft-disputed right to establish seamarks, resolved to take such measures as might be necessary to prevent the light being erected on Flat Holm without their authority or otherwise than in their name.

For the next two years nothing further was heard of it although, no doubt, it was still discussed locally and various schemes devised. Then, in April 1735, one William Crispe of Bristol wrote to the Trinity House

[2] Trinity House Letter Book (outward).

stating that he had taken a lease of Flat Holm Island for 99 years and desired to build a lighthouse and obtain a patent at his own expense but in the name of the Corporation of Trinity House, if he could have a lease of it (as was usual in the case of other lights) for a certain term of years and at an agreed yearly rent, adding that he intended to make formal application to them as soon as he could find what tolls the Bristol merchants were willing to pay. The Corporation agreed to negotiate with him in due course for 'such a term and rental as seemed proper.' From subsequent correspondence it appears that Crispe had leased the island at an annual rent of £35 from John Stuart, Earl of Bute, who owned considerable estates in South Wales.

William Crispe, who nowhere else seems to have crossed the pages of Bristolian maritime history, may have been a merchant there. At least he was well aware of the discussions amongst the merchants and mariners there on the need of a light, and it is evident that he had leased the island with the object of establishing a claim to the lease of a light there, as his letter to the Trinity House was written within two weeks of signing his lease of the island.

He submitted his proposals to the Society of Merchant Venturers, but at their meeting on 9 May they disapproved of them, but do not appear to have recorded their reasons. Crispe may have demanded too large a toll, but on the other hand it is fairly evident that he was not then prepared to lay out the capital sum in building the kind of tower or structure they considered essential for an efficient light. The subject then remained in abeyance for a time; however, the wreck of a vessel near the Holms towards the end of 1736, having sixty soldiers on board, all of whom were drowned, caused a great sensation in Bristol and gave some impetus to further negotiations for a light.

Crispe attended at the Hall of the Merchant Venturers on 17 March 1737 with new proposals. This time he was able to satisfy the merchants and they agreed to support his petition to the Trinity House, and John Elbridge was desired to write to Admiral Sir Charles Wager (Master of Trinity House, 1732-1737) stating that the merchants were now prepared to subscribe to the light.

Crispe's renewed petition came before the Board of the Trinity House on 2 April. In it he set forth that he was legally entitled to and possessed of the Island of Flat Holm for 99 years from Lady Day 1735. He went on to say that in consequence of the dangers in navigating the Bristol Channel and the frequent losses of ships, the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol had negotiated with him to build a lighthouse on the island and

subscribed to pay for every vessel passing the light the following tolls: for all Bristol ships to or from foreign parts 1½*d* per ton both inward and outward, according to their reports of tonnage at the customhouse, and double these dues on foreign ships.[3] For all coasting vessels to or from the Bristol Channel and all vessels to or from Ireland 1*d* per ton; vessels from St. David's Head or Lands End up the Bristol Channel (market boats and fishing boats excepted) one shilling for every voyage inward and one shilling outward. He said that the Merchant Venturers had insisted as a condition of their support that he should lay out not less than £900 in the building of a tower and the other necessary accommodation, which he was prepared to do. In this connection the merchants would have been well aware of the inadequate lights erected on the coasts, protected by crown patents granted to private individuals, but giving little or no aid to shipping, whose tolls they were compelled to pay, and clearly intended that the tower should be adequate for the kind of light they were covenanting to pay for.

In addition to the capital outlay for the building Crispe was willing to pay the expenses of the Trinity House in obtaining the crown patent for the light provided he were granted a lease of it for the term of years he had yet to come of the island, at a yearly rental of £5. At their next meeting (on 9 April 1737) the Corporation agreed to apply for a patent and to grant him a lease 'from the kindling of the light' to Lady Day 1834, when Crispe's lease of the island expired, at a yearly rental of £5 for the first thirty years and thereafter at £10 for the remainder of the term.

The leasing of lights was a common practice at that period, when once the rights of the Trinity House to obtain the patent had been acknowledged as well as their right to some control in order to ensure that the covenants were strictly observed, with, of course, the reversion to the Corporation at the end of the lease. The reasons, at this distance of time, are difficult to determine; but in an age when travel was difficult and places now within a few hours journey were considered remote, such establishments may have been better controlled locally. Also, it compared with the practice of farming out of the customs, the granting of tollgates, and many other privileges and practices long since obsolete; the day of unification of public services was still a long way off.

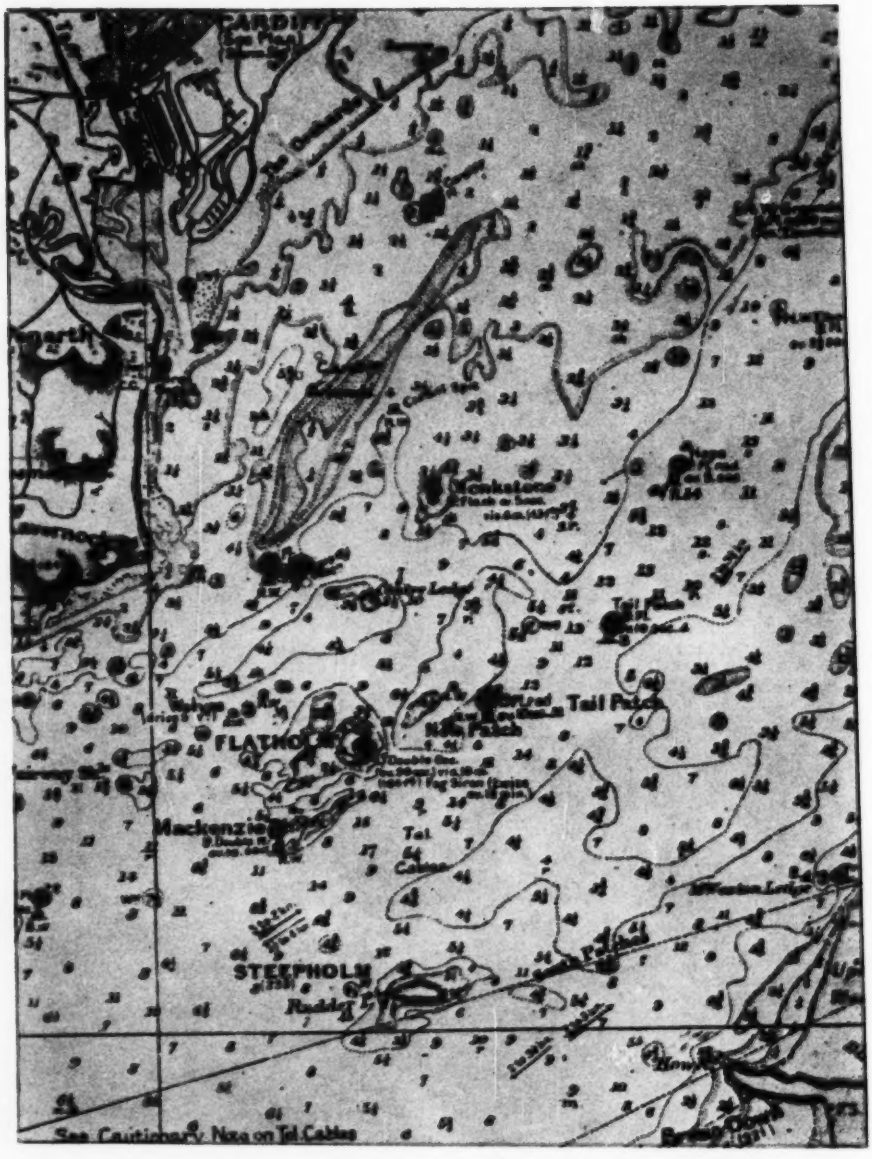
The rental of £5 and afterwards £10 was very low; however, in this instance the lessee was in the favorable position of having a long lease of the site which must have weighed very much to his advantage. This was beneficial too, as compared with owners and lessees of other lights who did

[3] Double rate of dues for foreign ships was general in all seventeenth and eighteenth-century lighthouse patents.

Aerial view of Flat Holm Island, showing the lighthouse and military barracks adjacent. Fog signal station on the right and farmhouse in the distance

Courtesy of Aerofilm, Limited

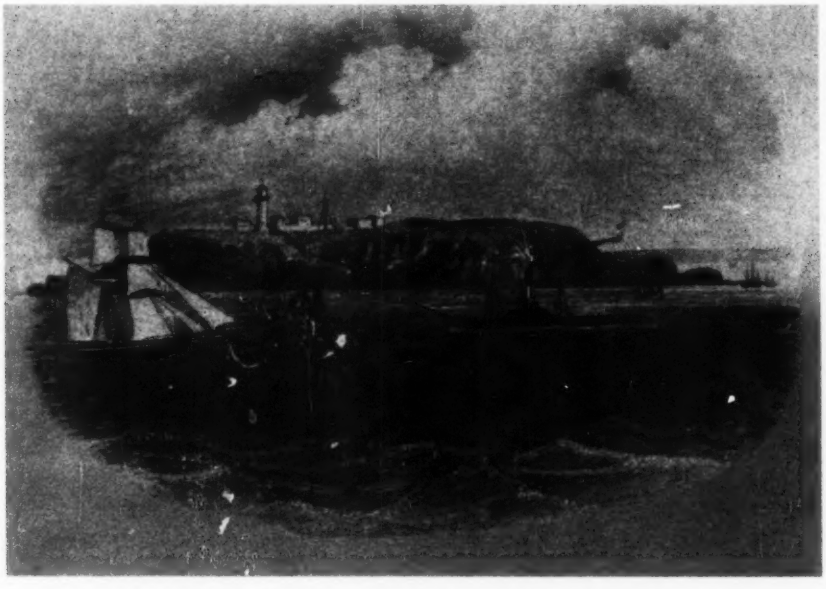
PLATE 1



Section of Bristol Channel chart, showing the islands of Flat Holm and Steep Holm

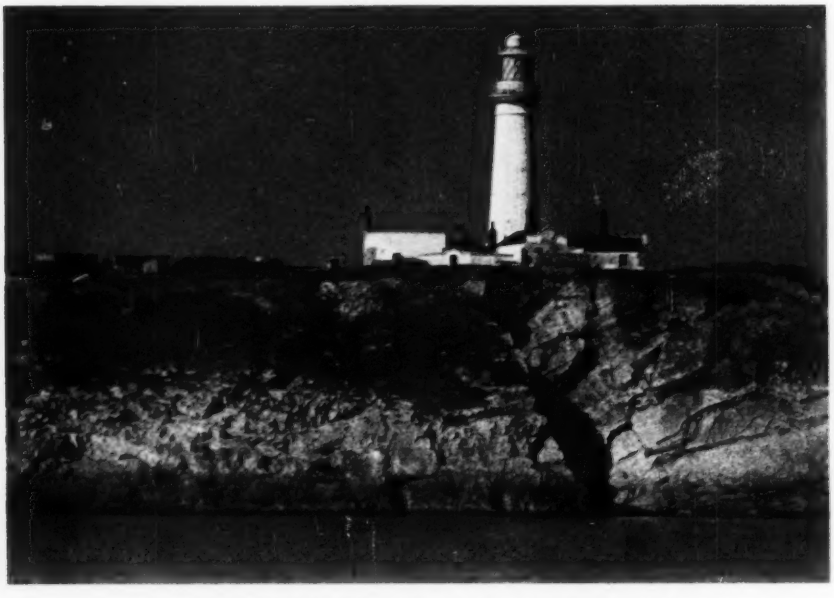
Reproduced by courtesy of Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson, Limited

The old Coal Fire Light at Flat Holm. From a water-color drawing by Julius Ibbetson, in 1790



Flat Holm Island; from an early nineteenth-century engraving

Photograph taken in 1875, divulging the existence of military defenses



Flat Holm Lighthouse, as seen from the southward

not own the land on which their lights were built and were frequently harrassed by short leases,[4] the landowner raising the ground rent at each renewal.

Agreement having been reached, the Corporation applied for and obtained a patent.[5] It is dated 2 June 1737 and is a very long document. It sets out firstly the powers granted to the Trinity House by the acts of the eighth and thirty-sixth years of Queen Elizabeth, and then recites 'the extreme dangers to Navigation in the Bristol Channel by Nass Sand, the Culver, the Two Fathom Sand (which is daily rising,) and the two small Islands called fflat and Steep Holmes together with the Wolves, Monkstone, Welch Hook and English Grounds, and also a new Sand rising between the two Holmes, by some of which causes many ships and vessels have been lost and their crews perished, which misfortune might have been prevented by a lighthouse on fflat Holme. . . .'

Continuing, it states that the Society of Merchant Venturers and eminent merchant shipowners of Bristol had petitioned the Trinity House for the lighthouse and consented to pay the tolls already described; and power and authority is granted to the Corporation to erect and maintain the said light with a coal fire and that forever the tolls may be taken from the time it shall be lighted 'without account to be rendered to us or our heirs.' The tolls were to be paid before clearing outward from the customhouse; for inward vessels, no custom officer or collector was to grant coquet or other discharge permitting goods to be unloaded without first producing a receipt for the light dues.

At all ports, havens, harbors and creeks where ships loaded or unloaded, customs surveyors and searchers were not to suffer vessels to evade payment; 'and to give full force, benefit and effect of the Grant, the Commissioners of the Treasury, the Commissioners for Executing the Office of Lord High Admiral, do strictly charge and command all Mayors, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, Captain's of Castles and Forts shall upon request assist them in the same.' In conclusion, the Trinity House shall 'for the better management and collection of the tolls have a place in all Custom Houses in all ports.'

On 3 September (1737) the Trinity House signed the lease, recording at the same time that William Crispe had paid the expenses in obtaining the crown patent, and had already started to build the lighthouse, and ordered that a copy of the lease be delivered to him after he had signed the counterpart in the presence of John Elbridge, and had covenanted that

[4] The early owners of the North and South Forelands Lights were for over a hundred years only able to get short leases for their grounds.

[5] Public Record Office: Letters Patent. 10 George II.

he and his successors would yield up the lighthouse in good repair at the end of the term. Much, however, was to happen before that distant date.

John Elbridge, who had had a leading part in the negotiations for the light—and was yet to have some further connection with it—was a prominent merchant of Bristol, and he and his forebears had long been associated with the Society of Merchant Venturers. He was a descendant of Giles Elbridge who had inherited the estates of the Aldworth family, prominent in the civic and mercantile affairs of the city a century before.

Thomas Aldworth, Mayor of Bristol in 1582 and again in 1592, was a member of the Society of Merchant Venturers. Robert Aldworth, son of Thomas, born in 1561, sometime an alderman, and Mayor of Bristol in 1609, was three times Master of the Society. He has been described as 'a famous merchant, a successful voyager, through many seas and an early promoter of American colonisation.' He died in 1634 and was buried in the Church of St. Peters, Bristol, where there is a handsome memorial to him. Contemporaneously, a Thomas Aldworth, probably a son of Robert, went to India in one of the early voyages of the East India Company and died at Surat in 1615.

Giles Elbridge, a warden of the Society of Merchant Venturers in 1620, married the daughter of Robert Aldworth, who made him his heir, and thereafter the estates of the Aldworths descended through the Elbridge family. Aldworth and Elbridge traded in partnership and very soon after the first settlement in North America they established an agency there. In August 1632 they obtained from the Council of New England a grant of a considerable tract of land in America and were promised further grants if they founded and maintained a colony there. They also owned land and estates in the West Indies, to which islands their vessels traded, sailing firstly to West Africa to barter for slaves. These were carried to the West Indies, the vessels then loading sugar, rum, and other commodities homeward to Bristol, where Robert Aldworth had a sugar refinery.

John Elbridge was descended from the above Giles. He is said to have been born in the parish of St. Anne, Jamaica, but no register has survived to confirm it. Apart from the American and West Indies estates he had inherited, very early in life he was an adventurer in privateering, an enterprise in which many Bristolian fortunes were made. Bristol was flourishing at this period and the success of the vessels of country-wide interest. There were times, wrote an observant traveler, when 'the very persons of Bristol talk of nothing but trade, and how to turn the penny.'

In 1708 John Elbridge was part owner of *Jamaica*, galley of 178 tons, having a crew of seventy-five and armed with eight guns. Three years

later he was part owner of *Hamilton*, frigate, and of *Hampton*, galley, all having a letter of marque. Thomas Elbridge, probably a brother, commanded *Hampton*. During the reign of William III, John Elbridge obtained the office of deputy controller of the customhouse at Bristol, a lucrative one, and held it for many years.

He was, however, better known for his charitable work and was one of the founders of the Bristol Royal Infirmary. At the second meeting convened for its establishment he was elected treasurer and thereafter took an active part in its building, providing at his own expense the furniture, equipment, and medicines for the first opening in 1737. In the next year he added a new ward at his own charge, costing £1,500.

He built himself a mansion house at Westbury, but earlier had lived for many years in a house in the Royal Fort (now the site of the University of Bristol) on St. Michael's Hill, and on a part of his garden built a free school. It is said that in all he expended and bequeathed £58,000 to charitable purposes.

He died 22 February 1739, soon after the founding of the hospital to which he had devoted so much of his last years, and was buried in the Church of St. Peters where his monument adjoins that of the Aldworth family. By his will he bequeathed a further £5,000 to the hospital and £3,000 to the school he had built. He was a wealthy man for that period and evidently died without issue as his larger legacies were to the daughters of his brother Aldworth Elbridge, and to sisters in New England. A gift of £2,000 was made to his friend, Henry Bodman, for administering his bequests to charities.

Returning to the light at Flat Holm, it is recorded as having been 'first kindled' on 25 March 1738, from which date William Crispe would be entitled to collect the dues. The massive circular tower, six feet in thickness at the base and sixty feet high was, and still is, a monument to the builder. Its cost is nowhere recorded, but Crispe had early taken into partnership one Benjamin Lund to share the cost. Before its completion, however, their joint assets were insufficient to meet their expenses and in October (1737) they had to raise a loan of £500 from John Elbridge on the security of the lease. At the same time Crispe and Lund subscribed to a deed of joint ownership, each granting the other one moiety of the lease of the island and of the light and its tolls, each to bear half the mortgage and each to be free to pay off his part at will, and to be free to sell his share of the lease and light.

Soon after the light was established the partners were in financial straits. The probable reason was that they had not yet been able to make

adequate arrangements for the collection of the dues. The difficulty of collecting dues was an ever-present problem to owners of lights, and evasion of payment was a common practice. Although the terms of letters patent would appear to give ample protection to the owner or lessee, unless they had been able to appoint honest, reliable and active collectors they were certain to lose some of their dues. Collectors frequently neglected their duty, others often allowed their friends to clear from port without paying.

Furthermore, although the merchants agitated for lights, once they were established they were often indifferent as to how they were maintained, and not above suspicion of encouraging evasion of payment of the dues. The records of other private lights show that the problem was common to them all; the mariners of the eighteenth century, particularly coasters and colliers, were very adept in evading the many and varied tolls levied in nearly every port, many of which were impositions and burdensome on trade.

Crispe and Lund increased their loan from John Elbridge by further sums of £700, £500, and £100, and in July 1739 they had a loan of £1,200 at 4½ per cent interest from Thomas Fane, an associate of John Elbridge (lately deceased), which was also on the security of the lease and letters patent. In November of the same year Lund borrowed £1,000 from a Mrs. Susannah Heylyn, widow, and entered into a bond to repay it within a fixed time.

As already noted, John Elbridge had died in February 1739; the loans to Crispe and Lund not having been repaid, the mortgage became a part of his estate, although still redeemable by the mortgagors. Three years later the loans were still unpaid and, in August 1742, the Honorable John Scrope,[6] Elbridge's executor, assigned the mortgage to his own nephew, the above-mentioned Thomas Fane. A year later Crispe and Lund were bankrupt, and in order to clear themselves of their debts, disposed of and surrendered their lease and letters patent to Caleb Dickinson.

The deed, dated 29 September 1743, recites all the previous ones and states that the debts amounted to £3,000, namely the loans by John Elbridge amounting to £1,800 (since assigned to Thomas Fane) and the £1,200 advanced by Fane, and witnesses that in return for a payment to Fane of £3,336: 2: 0 by Caleb Dickinson the three parties assigned to him the lease of the island, the lighthouse and its tolls, with no responsibility of redemption, although Crispe could redeem his moiety by pay-

[6] Hon. John Scrope (1662-1752), son of Thomas Scrope of Bristol, appointed in 1708 Baron of the newly constituted Court of Exchequer in Scotland, which office he resigned in 1724. Elected Recorder of Bristol: M.P. for Bristol 1727-1734, and Lyme Regis 1734-1752.

ment of £1,752: 2: 0 and Lund his for £1,586: 4: 0 with interest to the following 25 March. Neither, however, recovered his share and the light was to remain in the Dickinson family for three generations.

Thomas Fane, who was associated with the early affairs and finances of the light, was clerk to the Society of Merchant Venturers. He was the son of Henry Fane of Brympton, Somerset, a descendant of a younger son of the first Earl of Westmoreland. Henry Fane, whose fortune was founded in Bristol privateering and in the West African and West Indian trades, married Anne,[7] daughter of Thomas Scrope, a merchant of Bristol and sometime Member of Parliament for Winchelsea. He was appointed in 1701 clerk to the Society of Merchant Venturers, which office he held until his death in 1726 and was then succeeded in it by his son, Thomas.

Thomas Fane, who also married the daughter of a wealthy Bristol merchant, became a prominent lawyer in that city, and in addition to the above-mentioned office, held the lucrative one of customer (comptroller) of the port. He was also steward of several royal manors and sometime Member of Parliament for Lyme Regis. From family records it appears that his fortune was appreciably increased by successful privateering ventures. On the death of John Elbridge in February 1739, Fane succeeded him as collector of the Trinity House light dues at Bristol. A letter dated 6 March from John Whormby, Secretary of the Trinity House, informs him that the Board had that day approved his appointment and his deputation (warrant) would be forwarded shortly.

The duties appertaining to the many appointments held by prominent citizens, for which they received the fees, were invariably performed by a deputy or a clerk in their office.

In 1757 Fane resigned his clerkship of the Society of Merchant Venturers,[8] which was then conferred on his partner in his legal practice, who had, in fact, been carrying out those duties for some time past, and soon after retired from other offices he had held. This was evidently on account of his approaching elevation to the House of Lords, his elder brother, Francis, who until then had been heir to the earldom of Westmoreland, having died in this year.

This title came to him from a distant relative in the following way. John, the seventh Earl of Westmoreland, a general in the army, who had a distinguished career under the Duke of Marlborough, died in 1762 without issue, and the title then devolved upon Thomas Fane as eighth Earl, he being the only male descendant of Sir Francis Fane, third son of

[7] Sister and coheir of the before-mentioned John Scrope.

[8] On Fane's resignation he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Society.

the first Earl, and the next surviving male heir. However, it was not until February 1761 that he wrote to the Trinity House asking that his appointment as their collector be made over to his son, Henry (who held it until about 1772).[9] Thomas Fane, as eighth Earl, died in 1771.

Returning again to the light, as already noted, neither Crispe nor Lund were able to redeem their shares, but there still remained the loan of £1,000 from Susannah Heylyn, which was not cleared until some years later. From 1744 Caleb Dickinson had control of the light and received the dues, but seems to have been in the position of subtenant, and for several years he paid the interest on the loan from Mrs. Heylyn. Although it had been assigned to him for the above-mentioned sum, it appears that in the interest of the creditors the leases were subject to the highest offer and the complete purchase was not effected until 1753.

At some time the Earl of Bute,[10] the landlord of the island, had considered bidding for it. Dickinson had suggested to him that they should share in its purchase, and Edmund Lloyd, the Earl's estate agent, wrote to say that his Lordship was inclined to approve of it and enquired its value.

Some negotiations followed, and later the Earl, who signed himself by one of his lesser titles, namely Windsor, wrote Dickinson a very cordial letter thanking him for 'the kindness you show me, and shall think myself ever obliged to you whether I buy the Lighthouse or not, which I shall do if it comes reasonable and shall desire Mr. Lloyd to call on you. . . .' He goes on to ask what the mortgage on it amounted to, and what the clear profit had been for the past three years 'that I may be a better judge what it is worth.'

Caleb Dickinson evidently wished as part of any agreement for joint ownership, to share in the freehold of the island. In reply, Lord Windsor said that as he owned the fee (freehold) of the island he would be very glad to have the light 'but I am very unwilling to bid against you. As to the soil. I must tell you (since you behave so extremely civil to me) that I shall not part with that, as I am in great hopes that the lead and *calamy*[11] may turn out well; but if I ever do, I shall think it my duty to give you the first offer.' He ends by saying that he was willing to go to 5,000 guineas, but not beyond it.

A few days later he wrote to say 'If I should bid for the Lighthouse I

[9] His second son.

[10] John Stuart, Earl of Bute, a Scottish peer, acquired valuable estates near Cardiff and elsewhere in South Wales, including the Holms Islands, which had descended to his wife through the family of Herbert, Earls of Pembroke.

[11] Evidently calamine, the old name for zinc ores in general. This indicates an attempt to prospect for metal. Lead is said to have been mined there in ancient times.

shall not think I have acted by you, as much like a gentleman, as I think you have with me, which would for ever make me uneasy. I shall be very glad to hear you have bought it cheap . . . all the favour I desire is that my workmen may be permitted to find accommodation on the Island by paying what rent shall appear just to you.'

After some further polite exchanges, Lord Windsor again thanks Dickinson for the great civilities he had received from him, offers him a temporary loan to complete the purchase, and repeats that he had come to a resolution not to bid for the lighthouse 'for my lawyer informs me that in his opinion, if the Fire should go out by the fault of the person who is to keep it in, I shall be obliged to make any damage good, and as there was no wickedness that one could not expect from the person in charge, I would not run any risks.' He would, however, 'forever remember your behaviour and endeavour to copy from it.'

Caleb Dickinson, a merchant and shipowner of Bristol, was born in 1716, the son of Caleb Dickinson of that city and grandson of Captain Francis Dickinson who, for his gallant conduct when Jamaica was taken from the Spaniards in 1655 by the forces under Admiral Penn and General Venables, was granted 6,000 acres of land there. This property, which in Caleb Dickinson's time consisted of farms, sugar plantations and refineries, was in the parish of Elizabeth and was held by at least five generations of the family.

The Dickinsons were typical of the Bristol Merchant Venturers, ready to send their ships wherever a trade could be opened up. Possessing their own estates in Jamaica their principal interests would be in the West Indian trade, but they also owned or chartered ships trading to northern European ports. As already noted, in the first half of the eighteenth century Bristol merchants acquired large fortunes from privateering, and in this the Dickinsons had a share. In the years 1739 to 1748 Caleb Dickinson was part owner with his brother, Vickris, of *Jamaica*, frigate of 290 tons, mounting eighteen guns and a crew of fifty, having a letter of marque. They also shared the ownership of a larger vessel, *Union*, 390 tons, twenty guns, and manned by a crew of seventy, on privateering voyages.

In the 1730's he married Sarah, daughter of Graffin Prankard, a prominent Bristol merchant, and in 1744 was living at Castle Green, Bristol. From a perusal of the Dickinson manuscripts it seems that in early life he was a Quaker: however, the Quaker tendencies are not apparent in later life.

The pleasant correspondence over several years between Lord Windsor and Dickinson—which has been quoted from—ended in 1753 when

the former said, in a letter dated 28 February, from London: 'I shall always take a particular pleasure in shewing my readiness to oblige you. I give you my word I have no thoughts of buying it (the lighthouse) for myself or anyone else. If you think I can be of the least service you may command me.' He then goes on to say he was willing to send someone to bid for it, with instructions to bid up to £2,000 and then declare he would go no higher, in order that Dickinson should succeed by a slightly higher bid, and adds that his agent had £3,000 available which he could have the use of, 'but I must desire it may be repaid by the 22nd (March) as on Lady Day I am to pay out £2,500.'

The light and lease of the island now came completely into the ownership of Caleb Dickinson, and a deed dated 18 July 1753 recites the several mortgages and the loan of £1,000 due to John and Edward, the sons of Susannah Heylyn, deceased. As to the latter item, it records that Lund had paid £100 interest for the first two years, that Dickinson had paid £350 for the next seven, and that the principal and £225 interest for four and one half years was still owing. These amounts were now paid off, but the final deed of assignment to Dickinson is dated as late as 24 March 1755.

By a further deed of two days later (26 March) he disposed of two quarter shares, each for £1,162: 10: 0 to Thomas Rothley and George Adderley. The property was thus valued at this time at £4,650, a valuation of interest in regard both to subsequent revenue and to the valuations made later, in 1789 and in 1812, as hereafter related, and also to that at its ultimate disposal to Trinity House in 1823.

George Adderley, a merchant of Bristol, held his quarter share until his death, some thirty years later, and its disposal then will be referred to presently. He had no active part in the management of the light and his name only occasionally crosses the pages of its history. Thomas Rothley, however, had become associated with it some years before he acquired a share, when he was appointed collector of its dues at Bristol.

The earliest mention of Rothley is in 1735, when by a treasury warrant of 12 June he was appointed 'to be Clerk to check and keep an account of the proceedings of the Port of Bristol.'[12] About the same time he was also appointed collector of the Greenwich Hospital[13] dues, as in a letter to Caleb Dickinson dated 31 May 1745 he said that it was in June 1735 he first received this duty. The letter is addressed from the customhouse,

12 Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers 1735-1738 (*Public Record Office*).

13 Greenwich Hospital for maimed and aged seamen founded in the reign of William III. Acts of Parliament of 7, 8 & 9 years of his reign (as well as subsequent acts) provided for its revenue which included legacies, unclaimed prize money, pay due to seamen deserters, but principally a levy of sixpence a month from the wages of all seamen. For the latter, collectors were appointed in all ports. The levy was abolished in 1834.

Bristol, where as a collector of dues on shipping he would be entitled to an office, or as it was more usually described 'a desk at the Custom House.'

The reply to a letter no longer extant usually leaves something obscure; however, this one seems to have been in answer to an offer to him of the post of collector at Bristol of the dues on the Flat Holm Light, and also to have the management of the light and to keep the accounts, which he accepted. From this time onward, for nearly fifty years and to two generations of the family, his letters form an interesting part of the Dickinson manuscripts and throw some light on the problems with which the private lighthouse owners and their agents had to contend. We may suppose that the disposal to him of a quarter share of the light was intended, in addition to sharing the risk of the venture, to ensure a personal interest in the collection of the dues as well as a close supervision of the expenditure.

In his letters appear some of the petty dissensions amongst the people they had to employ. In the early years the coal was sent out to the island from Cardiff by one Michael Richards who seems to have been in fierce conflict with the tenant-keeper of the light, an irascible person named Gilpin, who persisted in creating difficulties in every possible way, and Richards in turn sent his grievances to the owners. As an instance, in October 1744 Richards wrote that he had lately sent his vessel out laden with coal and after a hard beat out to the island Gilpin refused to have it landed because, he said, the landing place was already full of coal. Because of his frustrated efforts he begs a further fifteen shillings for his 'extraordinary expenses.' On another occasion he wrote of his 'ill-usage' when his vessel went out 'with a very good loading of coal,' only to find that Gilpin had contrived to be absent from the island and the vessel had to return with it.

Two years later, however, he wrote triumphantly that Gilpin had been drowned when leaving the harbor of Barry to return to the island; the sea being 'too violent' his boat had capsized. With no delay he offered to find a new tenant, but Gilpin's widow was equal to the occasion and decided to continue to farm the island and maintain the light, having men to do the work. She also continued the dissensions with Richards, and her first move was to complain to Rothley of the quality of the coal. This, however, met with no success, and in the meantime Richards was able to reveal that she had offered his own brother half a guinea to swear that Bristol coal was much better than that from Cardiff.

Richards soon afterwards had other difficulties; his vessel having become so unseaworthy his men refused to go out in her and he had to ask of Rothley that a load of coal be sent from Bristol to maintain a supply on

the island until he could charter a vessel. His final benediction on his men being 'it is too troublesome to have to deal with a Sett of Animals who are as difficult to keep in order, as the waves they go upon.' Thereafter, little is heard of him, but he continued to supply the coal for many years.

The last glimpse of Mrs. Gilpin is in a letter of complaint from one Thomas Biss, employed on the island to assist with the light (later to become the tenant-keeper), in which he pleads with Rothley for some payment to a youth sent out there as one of the workmen, who having incurred her displeasure had been kept without food or shelter for three days until he escaped from the island in one of the pilot vessels. In his letter he says 'She drank so much strong liquor that she did not know what she did'; he makes a subtle hint concerning her association with a man on the island, and ends by saying that there were four lead miners there who were willing to assist with the light so they could carry on until someone else was sent. With this, Mrs. Gilpin passes off the stage and was soon afterwards removed from the island.

All these domestic troubles Rothley seems to have dealt with calmly and effectively; however, there were larger issues to claim his attention. In August 1758 the lessees sent a memorial to the Trinity House stating that many shipmasters and merchants were reporting their vessels at Bristol at one half or two thirds of their real tonnage, by which imposition the memorialists were 'greatly injured in their rights to the tolls and duties payable,' and prayed the Corporation would represent their grievance to the commissioners of customs and desire them to send an order to the collector and other officers at Bristol to compel the masters to swear in their reports to the true tonnage of their vessels and, if refused, not to permit them to enter or clear from the port until the collectors were satisfied. In reply, however, they were rather peremptorily told that the Corporation could not interfere in the matter.

Six years later (in June 1764), not being completely discouraged by the reply to their former appeal, they again represented to the Trinity House the continual evasions by the masters and merchants at Bristol. This time it brought forth a better response, as they were now advised to prepare a memorial to the commissioners of customs setting out the abuses and requesting them to order their officers at Bristol to have all ships measured and a register kept at the customhouse, and the Corporation would then give it their utmost support with the commissioners.

Rothley, however, did not expect that much would result from it, for later in the year he wrote to Caleb Dickinson that in his opinion the petition would signify little, and nothing would cure the evil except an act of

Parliament empowering the collectors of light dues to measure all ships for their tonnage and to compel the owners to pay accordingly. He suggested inviting others interested in lights to join with them in endeavoring to obtain such powers and to get the support of the Trinity House to it, and adds that their further complaint was still with Captain Conway[14] and, if he were free to go to London he would endeavor to get an answer to it.

Understating the tonnage of their vessels was only one of several ways by which the merchants and masters sought to evade payment of light dues. In the smaller ports—many of which are now defunct—the collectors were less reliable and often inattentive, and vessels frequently slipped away to sea without making payment. Where difficulties existed such as remoteness from the collector's office, every advantage was taken of them, especially by the coasters. Also, some collectors were not above making a private deal with the masters of locally owned vessels. In the principal ports, however, the collectors were men of substance, and who also held warrants from other lighthouse proprietors which collectively gave them a substantial income, and generally they performed their duties as efficiently as the then conditions permitted.

Whatever may have been done by the commissioners of customs does not seem to have had any lasting effect, as the question was raised again in a letter from Rothley to William Dickinson in 1773. William, the son of Caleb Dickinson, seems to have taken over the affairs of the lighthouse about this time, as from this year onward all Rothley's letters are addressed to him, although Caleb Dickinson lived for some ten years longer. In this letter Rothley again urges the need for an act of Parliament to enable the collectors of light dues to measure ships for their tonnage.

He said that as a long-established practice they allow as a concession an abatement of ten in every hundred tons of a vessel's burthen, yet the masters still remain obstinate and continue to swear to their tonnage at one half or two thirds of what they were, and cites the case of the ship *Grace*, trading between Bristol and New York whose master had for several years past sworn his ship's tonnage at 100, but on the appointment of a new master it was at once given as 237 tons, and ends by saying 'it is a matter of great Consequence to all Gentlemen concerned in Lighthouses, and the former master should be indited for perjury.'

Correspondence on the subject continued for over twenty years and many cases of evasion or attempted evasion of payment are quoted. As an instance of the casualness of the masters, a French East Indiaman brought

[14] Captain Michael W. Conway, Deputy Master of Trinity House, 1762-1775.

in as a prize had her tonnage declared by her captor as 400. When told that she measured 654, he replied 'Well, let us call it 500.'

In 1784 Rothley wrote: 'I have often complained to you of the difficulty I am under in collecting the Toll here for the Holm Light, and tho' I am confident you know how shamefully the Tonnage is sworn to and how injurious it is to all Proprietors of Lights: yet these impositions are submitted to without endeavouring to have them redressed.' In a further letter he gives the names of twenty-six ships whose total tonnage amounted to 8,604, but by understatement in varying degrees had paid only on 5,826, leaving dues on 2,778 tons between them unpaid. The ship *Lady Townsend* was the worst offender, being of 418 tons, but had been declared at 200. The lowest abatement was not less than 50 tons.

A patent having been granted in 1778 for a light on the Smalls, a group of rocks off the coast of Pembrokeshire, a copy of it was at once obtained and studied with great care by Rothley and Dickinson to find whether its terms gave the proprietors greater powers for the collection of their dues than they themselves possess, but seem to have agreed that it was in similar terms to their own. The grievance had existed ever since the lighthouse was built over forty years before, but the proprietors of Flat Holm had no more difficulties than had those of other lights, some of whom do not appear to have been unduly concerned over an issue they could not remedy. Rothley was subsequently appointed collector at Bristol for the Smalls light, and correspondence discloses some dissatisfaction on the part of the owner that the tonnage paid for at Bristol on certain known vessels differed from that paid to the collector at Liverpool, to his disadvantage.

Remedy, however, came in 1786 when an act of Parliament was passed, entitled 'An Act for the further Increase and Encouragement of Shipping and Navigation.'[15] Its purpose was to defeat abuses over a larger sphere and not specially intended as a protection to lighthouse proprietors, but by its requirements is did in fact do so, as it provided for the measurement and registration of all British ships and for a registry to be kept at all customhouses. The registry, being readily available to collectors when computing their dues, seems to have removed the grievances as nothing is further recorded of them. In fact, as early as October of the same year, Rothley wrote that, since the passing of the act there had been a great difference in the declared tonnage.

It is a long act of over forty clauses and from the preamble it appears to have been designed mainly to overcome the abuses of the privileges accorded to British-built ships, as well as to have some record of the coun-

[15] 26 George III (Cap. 60).

try's shipping. It enacted that, from 1 August of that year British vessels of over fifteen tons burthen were to be measured for their tonnage by a surveyor of the customs, their particulars entered in a register at the customhouse, and a certificate of registry issued to the vessel. Registration was limited to vessels built in Great Britain and the colonies and plantations, with certain exceptions which included permission to register foreign-built vessels condemned as lawful prizes in the Court of Admiralty, upon production of the certificate of condemnation under the hand and seal of the judge of the court, which certificate the act authorized and required him to grant.

It set out the manner in which a vessel was to be measured and the method of computing her tonnage from the measurements, but provided that nothing in the act should be construed to alter the manner of measuring the tonnage of a vessel which had heretofore been the practice for ascertaining the tonnage for light dues or any other duties or imposts.[16] A clause particularly excluded from registration vessels built 'in any of the Colonies of North America, now called the United States of America, during the time that by Acts of Parliament Great Britain had prohibited trade and intercourse with those Colonies,' or were owned by subjects of United States, and excluded them from any privilege or advantage enjoyed by British-built vessels, unless they had been taken and condemned as lawful prizes.

Bristol trade with America was considerable; many Bristol merchants had relatives in the United States, they had business interests, and some owned property there; consequently there was much sympathy with the cause of the colonists and a general desire to maintain their connection with them. At the conclusion of peace every effort was made to ensure a revival of trade and a general desire to avoid any discrimination against their vessels. Although all light dues and other duties imposed on foreign ships were always double those on British,[17] the higher rate does not seem to have been imposed on American ships when trade was resumed after the War of Independence until this act of 1786 so positively rated them as foreign.

Caleb Dickinson, who in earlier years had resided at Castle Green, Bristol, later built himself a mansion house at Kingweston, Co. Somerset, which has since remained the family seat. He died 6 April 1783, and was buried in the parish church at Kingweston where there is a memorial to him. He bequeathed his estate to his only son, William, and desired that

[16] In practice, the method established by the act for calculating tonnage was generally used for all dues.

[17] Flag discrimination was discontinued after the act of Parliament of 1836.

his house should remain in the family and be 'always considered the county seat and chief place of residence of his son, when out of London, and to use it to entertain his friends.'

His estate included 'my one full moiety or half part of the Flat Holm Island and the Lighthouse thereon, and the duties and profits thereof,' as well as plantations, sugar works, cattle, etc., on the island of Jamaica and uncultivated land thereon; land and houses in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, bequeathed to him by his Uncle Jonathan Dickinson and cousin Jonathan Dickinson.

As already noted, Thomas Rothley, besides being the principal collector of the dues, had the more active part in the management of the light and kept the accounts, forwarding to the Dickinsons every year a return of the income and expenditure, and the net amount due to each of the three partners according to their share. These accounts give some information of the expenses of maintenance, but unfortunately, not in as much detail as would make them of interest at the present time. Coal, of course, was the principal item: in 1753 it cost sixteen shillings a chaldron, or roughly about twelve shillings and six pence a ton, which evidently included freight to the island and for discharging it there, as an entry in the accounts indicates that about 10 pence a chaldron was included for these charges. During the next thirty years the price rose slowly but steadily; in 1763 it was seventeen shillings a chaldron, and by 1783 it had risen to nineteen shillings.

The next principal figure in the accounts is the annual rent of the island, of £35 payable to the Bute estate. Coal baskets are a constantly recurring item but they only cost two shillings each. Carpenters', masons' and blacksmiths' accounts appear from time to time but no details of the work are given and they are too irregular to be averaged over a period of years. A mare sent out to the island for carting the coal from the landing place to the lighthouse cost £5: 15: 0, and the occasional shoeing five shillings each time. Many accounts are included with no indication of what they were for, but no doubt were quite clear to the owners.

A claim of sixteen shillings was paid for poor tax, but the question of tithes or church rates, often a bone of contention between church authorities and lighthouse proprietors on the mainland, did not arise until 1793 when the Reverend W. M. Lowder, vicar of Cardiff, wrote that he 'wished to recover my right in the matter,' and said he was ready to settle in an amicable way as he was averse to compulsive measures. He said that corn and other titheable produce was grown on the island, that he had as-

sessed a former tenant at £2 a year but had agreed with him for a guinea a year, yet had never been paid anything.

He now made a claim on the tenant-keeper, a Mrs. Taylor, for arrears of the tax, threatening in the event of nonpayment to take legal proceedings. From the various accounts of her activities and the effective way in which she dealt with troublesome employees and workmen she seems to have been a masterful woman, but when the reverend gentleman threatened also that he would excommunicate her from the church and that 'she should never have any Burial Service,' this was too much for her and she appealed to the proprietors for help. They refused to pay, and advised her 'to lead a good life and disregard his threats.'

With this comfort they left it to the vicar to sue her; however, when he proceeded to do so they became more concerned. Rothley wrote to Dickinson to say that although they were not liable to pay, it would be to their interest to advise her how to act: 'I should be much concerned if she should be ruined by this Prosecution, not only for her suffering, but at our loss of a person who takes great care of the Light and coals.'

John Osborne, their lawyer, was consulted and he advised that unless a guinea a year was beyond the value of the tithe it should be paid. It was therefore decided that, if the vicar's demands were found to be reasonable it would be better for them to pay than to have their tenant involved in a lawsuit. 'I confess,' wrote Rothley, 'I detest all impositions, nevertheless it is sometimes necessary to submit to them if we value our peace of mind more than our money.' However, they procrastinated for nearly a year, and the final amount in settlement is not recorded.

George Adderley, the Bristol merchant who held the other quarter share, died in January 1786, and after a legacy to the Bristol Royal Infirmary, bequeathed his estate, consisting principally of his house and land at Westerleigh, Co. Gloucester, some houses at Clifton Hill and in Milk Street, Bristol, and 'my quarter share in Flat Holm Island Light' to his widow, Ann. She, however, died a little over two years later, in August 1788, and after providing for a daughter, left the remainder of her estate including the share of the light to one John Broughton and his heirs. John Broughton in the following year sold the share of the light, as by a deed dated 29 September 1789 it was assigned to Anthony Palmer Collings (referred to later), collector of the customs, for the sum of £1,900. This figure shows the total value of the light at this time to have been assessed at £7,600.

On the night of 22 December 1790, a gale of exceptional violence oc-

curred which caused considerable destruction in the west of England, and Flat Holm Lighthouse suffered some damage. To quote from the tenant-keeper's report to Rothley: '. . . we expected every moment to be our last. At three o'clock in the morning of the 23rd the tower was struck by lightning. The man attending the fire was knocked down and narrowly escaped falling through the stairway. The iron fire grate was smashed to pieces and the top of the tower considerably damaged.' He said that until repairs were effected the only alternative was to maintain a fire on the headland in front of the lighthouse.

Although the first report said that the tower had been split halfway down, a detailed survey by a mason showed that it was not so serious as was feared, and the masonry had a large crack for no more than ten feet down and two inches wide at the top. The repairs took a long time, owing to the heavy oak beams supporting the top platform having to be renewed. From the correspondence relating to the repairs it appears that there was a limekiln on the island (probably dating from the building of the lighthouse) which was brought into use and limestone burned for making the mortar, the slack and dross of the lighthouse coal being used for the burning.

The accounts for the repairs do not appear until the annual statement of income and expenditure of the following year, and considering the extent of the damage the total of £148, of which £67 was for a new grate and other ironwork, seems extraordinarily light. The proprietors thought that their expenses for the year had been heavy, but Rothley observed that 'considering the expense we have been at for repairs etc. we have abundant reason to be thankful we had so large a receipt.'

In a further letter he said: 'Last year was the greatest collection I ever made, and attribute it to the Registering Act,[18] that American ships now pay as foreigners, and there has been an unusual number of foreign ships with timber.' This confirms that the passing of the act had given them the protection against false declarations they had so long desired; and also that the higher dues for foreign ships had only belatedly been applied to American ships.

About this time a curious suggestion was made. Lord Mountstuart, the freeholder of the island,[19] wrote to William Dickinson to say that he had had an examination made of the lead mines on the island and found such encouragement from the report as to induce him to think seriously of reopening them. He had since visited the island himself and as a result had

[18] The act of 1786 already referred to.

[19] Heir to the earldom of Bute; sometimes referred to as Lord Cardiff.

realized that quarrels were certain to arise between the men so employed and the tenant there and those employed by him to look after the light, whose policy it would be to thwart his undertaking. He then suggested that he should become the tenant of Dickinson on the same terms as the present one, and would undertake that his men would look after the light and that 'no detriment should arise, from negligence to the Navigation,' adding, too, that the present tenant might be provided for in some other way. Rothley was not in favor of the suggestion and advised the retention of the present tenant. In reply to a letter from Lord Mountstuart to himself he said that Mr. Dickinson would meet him in London during the following month to discuss the matter. Evidently they did not come to any agreement as nothing came of it.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Flat Holm Island seems to have been fairly prosperous. John Collinson, in his *History of the County of Somerset*, 1791, says that in his time, in the center of the island there was a good farmhouse and 'a dairy of cows is kept there; in summer many persons went to the Island, which is very pleasant.' However, we have a more intimate account of it in the early years of the nineteenth century in the *Memoir of Dr. Thomas Turner*, who wrote of his visit there and described the lighthouse as it was and had been since its first establishment, which is of considerable interest because firsthand accounts of the old coal-fire lights of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are rare.

Dr. Turner,[20] a Somerset surgeon, when a young man, spent his vacation in 1815 at Weston. One day in June he went off to Flat Holm and after a hazardous passage in a small boat, landed there safely, but, owing to increasing wind, was unable to return to the mainland and spent the night at the inn which had long existed on the island. He found it so comfortable and the place so pleasant that on the following morning he enquired of the innkeeper, who was also the tenant and lightkeeper, what he would charge for 'a good bedroom, with leave to eat whatever the Island would afford,' to which his host replied twenty-five shillings for one week. Turner at once decided to stay, finding, as he says, 'the place both restful and interesting.'

Turner's week on the island gave him time and opportunity of learning everything concerning its history and the lives of the people there, as well as ample leisure to commit it to his journal. The livestock is carefully recorded as seven cows, two bulls, five sheep, one horse, two pigs and

[20] Dr. Thomas Turner (born at Truro in August 1793) subsequently became surgeon at Manchester Royal Infirmary, professor of Manchester Royal Institution, and a member of the Royal College of Surgeons. He died in December 1873. His *Memoir*, compiled from his diaries by a relative, were published in 1875.

two dogs, and adds that rats and rabbits existed in large numbers. The inhabitants, he remarks, enjoyed an advantage given to few persons, in a total exemption from all rates and taxes. The church tithe does not appear to have been mentioned!

He describes a well there, known as 'Buddel's Well,' of uncommon depth, far deeper than most wells usually were, which had the peculiarity that, although the water was excellent, its level was influenced by the tide, and that when the tide was low the water in the well was high and at high tide the well was dry. Of the two wells on the island only this one was so affected. The innkeeper, besides being a good host was, as already noted, the tenant farmer and the keeper of the lighthouse, and it was from him that Turner learned the story of the island as well as of the light which, of course, was the principal feature of interest.

The lighthouse was then between seventy and eighty years old, but the tenant and innkeeper was able to give some account of all his predecessors who had had charge of it. He said that the first one had lived on the island for a great many years (probably the before-mentioned Gilpin); after him came a man named Biss who lived there nearly as long, and was succeeded by his (the present tenant's) father-in-law, who stayed for twelve years. He in turn was followed by another who had nine years there (evidently Taylor and subsequently his widow who, like an earlier one, had been a problem to the proprietors) and whom he himself had followed. This being the order, he said, of the occupiers of the island since the lighthouse was built, and shows him to have been only the fifth tenant of this then isolated island in eighty years.

Turner was told that the island was owned by William Dickinson, Esq., one of the Members of Parliament for the County of Somerset, 'a gentleman of very large fortune who resided at his seat near Glastonbury.' He learned that as lightkeeper he received no salary but was remunerated by having a house rent free and the land of the island to farm in any way he pleased, but from the revenue of it (and no doubt the inn) he had to lodge and maintain the two men necessary to carry the coal and attend to the fire, and to pay each £15 a year, which Turner thought 'not more than adequate compensation for the disturbed repose that their situation exposed them to.'

He described the lighthouse as a very substantial one, built of stone by the original lessee, seventy-two feet high, 'the top being reached by 128 stairs in a winding manner.' The top was quite flat and about twenty-five or thirty feet in circumference, having around it cast-iron railings. In the center there was a grate six feet high and about ten feet round, with bars

of the thickness of four inches. 'In this there is constantly a fire, but during the day time there is little or no appearance of any, but when darkness set in it was re-kindled.' The quantity of coal consumed, he was told, was very considerable, on an average fifteen bushels a night, but 'sometimes when the weather is very boisterous, twenty-five bushels are burnt. and less would not possibly do.'

The old coal measure of a chaldron was thirty-six bushels and weighed on an average 25½ cwt. Taking the nightly consumption of fifteen bushels it would mean that a little over half a ton was consumed every night in fine weather. Allowing for the occasions of boisterous weather and daytime consumption it may be estimated that about twenty-five tons of coal was conveyed to the island every month, landed on the beach under the difficulties of the frequent rough weather, and then conveyed over a rough track to the lighthouse. For every night between a half and three quarters of a ton had to be carried in baskets up the steep and winding stairway of the tower to maintain the fire until the following morning.

At the time the lighthouse was surrounded by a high wall which formed a yard for the storage of coal, and Turner concludes his account by saying that it may not be uninteresting to relate that outside the wall was a large heap of cinders, the accumulation of many years, possibly since the tower was built, which had been set on fire about eight months before by some mischievous boys and 'has continued burning to the present time and is likely to remain so.'

The statement that the keeper received no salary does not quite accord with the facts, as a regular item in the annual accounts is the payment to the keeper of £5 quarterly as salary, to which must be added the £35 ground rent of the island, paid by the proprietors. Nevertheless it was not a princely salary considering the payments that had to be made for assistance.

The cliffs of Flat Holm contain a number of caves; the principal one, on the face of the East Cliff, was long known as Smugglers' Hole. It has been said that the island was for generations a smugglers' haunt. Their activities must have been well known to and possibly shared by successive keepers, and equally so by the pilots whose cutters cruised in the vicinity and made the island anchorage their base, and who also may have shared in the ventures. The contraband may well have been the principal source of supply for the inn.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries 'The Trade' was an extensive and lucrative one. A Parliamentary committee in 1783 reported that there were upwards of 300 English vessels continuously en-

gaged in smuggling, besides foreign smacks, post-office packets, East Indiamen, ordinary trading vessels, and fishing boats which did an occasional business; but how many of either class operated in the Bristol Channel, or how much of the two million pounds of tea and thirteen million gallons of brandy supposed to have been smuggled into the country between 1780 and 1783 entered by way of Somerset there is,[21] of course, no means of knowing. Geographically, the opportunities were less than on the English Channel and east coasts. However, as recently as the latter years of the nineteenth century there were men still living who claimed to have seen Smugglers' Hole well filled with brandy that had paid no duty.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Trinity House was replacing the coal fire by oil lights in the lighthouses under their control. This gave rise to complaints by mariners of the more primitive ones; the lessees of the private lights were reluctant to incur the expense of improvements, being more concerned with the income from them than in aiding the mariner.

Complaints of the Holm Light first appear in 1791, which incidentally coincides with the time the lighthouse was under repair after the damage by lightning, and the fire was being maintained on the headland. They were made by the masters of coasting vessels to the Trinity House light dues collector at the London customhouse, who forwarded them on to the proprietors. Rothley, commenting on them in a letter to Dickinson, assured him that a good fire would always be maintained. However, there was a hint of recent failure as he admitted that there had been some difficulty in maintaining a good stock of coal on the island, and he had recently been 'disappointed of a cargo, the weather being very tempestuous the captain would not go there.'

In the same letter, he referred to the possibility of converting the light from a coal fire to an oil lamp, and said that a few years before he had seen the lamps installed in Portland Bill Lighthouse, but added that unless they could prevail on the Bristol merchants to pay higher dues for a 'light with Lamps, Reflectors and Lenses' and obtain a patent for such dues 'I fear we must keep our Light in the usual way.'

As early as 1778 he had been concerned to find a form of light more easily maintained and more satisfactory than a coal fire, and in that year he wrote to Caleb Dickinson calling his attention to the 'description of a

[21] Danish East Indiamen trading to China brought home large quantities of tea which they sold on the continent to those engaged in smuggling into England, where the demand for tea was three times as great as the rest of Europe put together. The repeal of the tea duty ended the smuggling of it, and was a severe blow to Danish shipping: C. Northcote Parkinson, *War in the Eastern Seas*, p. 44.

machine for an oil light' published in the *St. James's Chronicle*,[22] and suggested that his son might wish to see it when in London. The description of the 'machine' is rather vague, and is better described as in the above journal:

> A very ingenious contrivance has been lately finished at the Cabinet makers in Aldersgate Street, as a substitute for the fire placed on the top of a lighthouse. It consists of a large Lanthorn, the Frame Work of which is made of Iron and Brass, and covered with Copper, over which is fixed a Fane.[23] The Frame is glazed with large Squares of Plate-glass. In the centre of the Lanthorn is a hollow Cylinder, as a Reservoir for Oil, which flows from thence through several horizontal Tubes which support a circular one at Mid-distance of the Lanthorn and Cylinder, in which last Tube are contained a great many Burners: The front of the Cylinder is covered with small square mirrors, fix'd close to each other by which means such a Magnificent Light is reflected as will (it is supposed) be seen twenty miles at sea. A very considerable Expense will be saved by the above Contrivance, as, it is said, a Gallon of Oil will be equal to three Chaldrons of coal. The whole is upwards of a ton weight. It has been lighted up several times, and the effect is Amazingly Grand.

No further mention is made of the 'machine' and it does not appear to have been anywhere adopted.

Thomas Rothley, the last survivor of those associated with the light from its earliest years, died in 1798, in his eighty-eighth year, after over fifty years of an active part in its affairs. As already noted, he had first become associated with Caleb Dickinson in 1745 when he took over the management of the light and collection of the dues at Bristol. Little is known of him, but his letters to two generations of the Dickinsons build up a picture of a careful and punctilious official, always attentive to their joint interests in the light, assiduous in the collection of the dues and careful in the expenditure, sending every year a precise account of the income and division between them of the profits.

He appears to have had an illness in 1792, when he ended one of his letters by saying 'I write as little as I possibly can, and flatter myself that my friends will excuse my retiring from the World and indulging a second Childishness'; and a few days later his deputy, Richard Collinson, wrote: 'Mr. Rothley seems to be hastening thither from whence no Traveller returns. . . .' However, he rallied, and until 1794 (after which no further records are extant) his letters show that he still had control of the affairs of the light and continued to write concerning the ever recurring domestic problems on the island.

Although in February 1794 he ended a brief letter by saying 'You will

[22] *St. James's Chronicle or British Evening Post*, in the issue of Tuesday, 19 May 1778.
[23] Fane: Middle English for vane—weather vane (O.E.D.).

allow it is excusable when I tell you that before this reaches you, I shall be in the eighty-fourth year of my age,' in his next one he was as alert as ever, and exuberantly reports that eight sail of transports under convoy of two frigates, with the 28th and 55th Regiments bound from Cork for Ostend, were driven into the Bristol Channel by stress of weather, and he would endeavor to compel the captains to pay the light dues.

The name of his first wife has not been traced, but he married, secondly, about the year 1770, Margaret, widow of Samuel Gardner, merchant, of Bristol. She died only two years later, in August or September 1772, having, apart from a marriage settlement, made a will disposing of the estate bequeathed to her by her first husband, consisting of property at Westbury and Bristol. Apart from the above, she gave to a niece 'the miniature picture set in diamonds of my new husband, Thomas Rothley, and an annuity of £10 to Richard Peters, the black servant of her former husband, since presented to Thomas Rothley,' to be paid to him quarterly after her death.

Rothley seems to have had no surviving descendants as his estate was bequeathed to a number of relatives and friends, as well as to several goddaughters. A passing reference is made to a daughter-in-law as Lady Elizabeth, the first wife of Sir Clement Cottrell-Dormer,[24] with an inference that she was the granddaughter of the Mrs. Susannah Heylyn who in earlier years had made a loan to the first lessees of the light. This throws a little light on how the financing of the lighthouse had been kept within a very limited circle of friends. His miniature portrait set in diamonds had returned to him and was now bequeathed to his goddaughter, Eliza Bush, wife of Robert Bush, one of his executors. Several people associated with the lighthouse were remembered and all his servants had generous legacies. The Royal Infirmary, liberally supported by Bristol merchants for so many years, received £100.

One, Stephen Moseley, was given £300 and a further £20 a year for three years after his death 'to settle my books and accounts.' His executors, Richard Stratton, Anthony Palmer Collings, collector of the customs (who held one quarter share in the light), and the before-mentioned Robert Bush, received handsome legacies; the former was given a house as well, and Collings was left Rothley's own house on College Green, Bristol, with all it contained, for his occupation for life and for his wife if she survived him.

Rothley was buried in the parish of St. Augustine. In his later years he

[24] Sir Clement Cottrell-Dormer (17--1808), master of the ceremonies, an office held in successive generations of his family. He married Miss Heylyn in 1783 (*Burke*, 1952 ed., p. 677).

had been well aware of the increasing complaints concerning the light, but passed on before they became too insistent to be ignored, although they did to some extent bring forward the day when it would be taken over by the authority about to be given power to acquire all coast lights. Rothley's estate was not finally settled for some years as it was not until 1812 that Robert Bush, by then the only surviving executor, disposed of the quarter share of the light. It was then assigned to William Dickinson, junior, by a deed dated 21 September of that year for £3,400, who thereafter owned three quarter shares. From the above figure it appears that the light and lease were then assessed at £13,600, with twenty-two years of the lease to run.

William Dickinson, senior, died at his London house in Harley Street, on 26 May 1806. Early in life he had been Member of Parliament for Great Marlow, afterwards for Rye, one of the Cinque Ports, 1777-1780; for Ilchester Borough, Co. Somerset, 1796-1802, and for Somerset County from 1802 until his death. His estate, including the inheritance of the manor of Kingweston and other property, the estates and land in Jamaica, now passing into the fifth generation, as well as his half share in the Flat Holm Light, now representing an appreciable income, was bequeathed to his only son, William.

William Dickinson, junior, born in 1771, like his father was elected to Parliament early in life, and represented Lostwithiel, Co. Cornwall, 1802-1806. From 1806 he was the Member for Somerset County, the seat formerly held by his father and grandfather, and held it through successive elections until 1831. As noted above, in 1812 he acquired the share in the Holm Light formerly owned by Rothley, which with the one half he had inherited gave him a three-quarter share.

William Dickinson, senior, was soon followed by his former partner, Collings, who died on 28 May 1809 at his home in Gloucester, at which port he was then collector of customs and had, in October 1792 been appointed collector of Trinity House light dues, and probably collector for some of the private lights. Little is known of him beyond that in his obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of the above year: 'Anthony Palmer Collings, Collector of the Customs at Gloucester; a gentleman deeply lamented by all who had the happiness of his friendship, and by everyone who had business to transact at the Custom House.'

His share in the Holm Light was not sold, for by his will he had bequeathed it on trust to his executors to invest the revenue from time to time until when added to the principal there was accumulated a sum of £1,500 for each of his children and then paid to them. John Osborne

(clerk to the Society of Merchant Venturers) and his brother Jeremiah, solicitors, were to be free to settle his affairs notwithstanding that the former was a trustee. The share in the light was still held on trust until the lighthouse was eventually acquired by the Trinity House, as referred to later.

In the following year (1810) John Osborne, who in no small way had been associated with the owners of the light, died on 16 February. In June 1770 he had been appointed collector of the Trinity House light dues at Swansea and Neath. As he was living in Bristol at the time he evidently performed this office through a deputy, a practice common at that time. For long before this time, and well after, it was common for lucrative posts to be held by persons who drew the emoluments of office and had the duties performed by a relatively low-paid deputy. In 1796 he had been appointed joint clerk to his father, Jeremiah Osborne, who was clerk to the Society of Merchant Venturers. When the latter died in 1798, John Osborne succeeded him, and three years later his brother, Jeremiah, junior, was appointed joint clerk, and succeeded to the higher office in 1810. The *Gentleman's Magazine* records the passing of John Osborne: 'In the prime of life Mr. John Osborne, of Bristol, Attorney at Law. No one more ultimately blended the man of honour with great professional ability, nor the man of business with the real gentleman. While a generous bosom is held in esteem among mankind, and any survive who knew him, his memory cannot want an eulogist.'

During these years complaints of the inadequacy of the light had continued, and in March 1810 the Bristol shipowners sent a list of them to the Trinity House who as lessor was expected to compel their lessee to comply with the terms of their agreement and patent. These were sent on to William Dickinson, junior, with an order to remedy the defect without delay. In May the Corporation had a reply from him: the letter is no longer extant, but by the resolution of the Board it appears that he had made enquiries concerning an extension of the lease as a condition of making any improvement in the light, and in reply was told that the Corporation would not in any circumstances grant any extension, but it would be expected of the lessees 'that they keep a good and visible Coal-light exhibited during the remainder of their term, and we hope his care in having it properly attended to will prevent any further complaints against it.'

The complaints, however, continued, and in October 1811 the secretary to the committee of Lloyd's wrote to the Trinity House enclosing an extract from a letter they had received on the subject of the Flat Holm

Light, and asked for a reference to the act of Parliament relating to it for the purpose of ascertaining what duties and obligations devolved upon the parties to whom the lighthouse belonged. In reply he was informed that it was not established under any particular act, but under the general power vested in the Corporation for maintaining lights; and 'that it was in the hands of an individual under lease from the Corporation and erected and convenanted to be continued as a Coal-light, and the rate of dues was calculated only for maintaining such a light. In making any alteration it would be necessary that a representation should come from the Trade using the Bristol Channel, and if altered to an oil light (as stated in their extract letter) an application to that effect; and their consent to pay such additional toll as might be found necessary to maintain such a light.'

Wrecks in the Bristol Channel during the period covered by this account are too many to record even if they could all be traced; nor can it be known how many vessels lost there were attributed to the ineffective light. In January 1773 Rothley, in a letter to Dickinson, reported that *Tapley* had lately gone ashore on the Holm and nine lives lost, and that a ship from London had been wrecked there three months earlier and her loss had caused much clamor in Bristol, but does not indicate whether any defects in the light had been adduced for them. However, a wreck occurred near Flat Holm many years later—in October 1817—which aroused considerable public attention owing to the circumstances attending it and the heavy loss of life. It happened on a fine, clear night in good weather, and although it was in no way attributed to any deficiency in the light, it gave some incentive to certain individuals who, in addition to the more collective representations, were then agitating for an improved light, as hereafter related.

The sloop *William and Mary*, a regular packet between Bristol and Waterford, sailed from Pill, on the River Avon (about two miles below Bristol), about 9:00 P.M. on the twenty-third of the above month having on board about fifty-five passengers including twenty-two women, and a crew of ten. As stated, the weather was fine and clear, there was a fair wind and a full moon. However, about 11:00 P.M. the vessel struck on the Wolves (Willeys or Woollies in the contemporary accounts), a reef of rocks about three miles from Flat Holm Lighthouse, and sank in fifteen minutes amid tragic scenes. The one small boat was soon filled, mainly by some of the crew who appear to have done little to assist in saving the lives of the women or other passengers.

Of the total on board only nine were saved, most of them by clinging to

the topmast, still above water after the vessel sank, and through the exertions of one John Hayes, late mate of a vessel trading to Honduras and now returning to his home in Ireland, who had directed the survivors to go aloft as the vessel foundered. The master was lost, but the mate, who was on watch when the vessel stranded, was saved, but disappeared immediately after landing and was never seen again.

Between 28 October and 27 November, six or seven accounts in *The Times* described the harrowing scenes as the vessel sank. The reports were conflicting; in one it was said that the mate had left the helm and was 'romping with a girl'; however, they generally agreed that it was due entirely to his negligence, and his disappearance on landing and failure to attend the enquiry at Bristol tends to confirm it. It has been said that about fifty bodies recovered were buried in a common grave on Flat Holm, marked by a single large stone. The stone no longer exists, and one writer has said that some fifty years later it was used in the building of the hospital (hereafter referred to) on the island.

A suggestion made some years afterwards, that the conversion of the light to oil resulted from the loss of this vessel is without foundation, as the negotiations for its improvement started long before this time, although in fact they were not carried into effect until some years after. The primitive light was then no worse, if no better, than it had been for the past eighty years; the reason for the complaints was that it had fallen below the then contemporary standards, other coast lights having been altered to lanterns with oil lamps, and some already giving distinctive characters.

William Dickinson, senior, who died in 1806, had recommended his son 'not to sell my moiety of the Flat Holm Lighthouse' but to keep it as a source of income; however, by 1818 William Dickinson, junior, had been contending with complaints for over ten years. The lease was running out, and the correspondence with the Trinity House some years before would have left him in no doubt that it would not be renewed. Furthermore, he could not be unaware of the increasing opposition to the principle of privately owned lighthouses, and therefore there was little incentive to incur the expense of any avoidable improvements.

Arising out of the complaints a contemporary critic said that the owners enjoyed a large income from it, yet refused an additional £100 a year to make it a reasonable aid to shipping. This was probably true, but the owners of private lights were usually remote from the sea and shipping, had little knowledge of the needs of the mariner and often little regard for them, and their light just an investment—often inherited—with no

obligations beyond the bare limits of what had been covenanted to do, regardless of how much their revenue may have increased.

The lease of the Flat Holm had been a good investment. With the increase in the size of ships and the growth of trade, the revenue had steadily increased since Caleb Dickinson had first acquired it. From existing records it appears that the net income for the owners, after deducting maintenance and all other charges, had risen over half a century as follows: 1755–£320; 1765–£470; 1785–£548; 1795–£700; and 1805–£1,156, and thereafter continued to rise proportionately. Although latterly a substantial amount for that period, it was a modest lighthouse revenue when compared with other private lights on which dues were collected from a larger volume of shipping such as the Smalls or the Skerries lights, as Flat Holm served only the trade to Bristol and the Severn River ports.

The Bristol traders continued their agitation and eventually, on 16 April 1818, William Dickinson attended at the Trinity House and made proposals for the transfer to them of the remainder of the lease. What they were is not known, and it is only recorded that he was invited to put them in writing for further examination. However, after further consideration he decided not to sell out, and in a letter of 15 July made an alternative suggestion that the Trinity House should undertake the necessary alterations to establish an oil light and maintain the station for the remainder of the lease at an annual charge against himself and the executors of Collings. This was declined, possibly because the suggested sum was inequitable to the capital outlay and maintenance, and left him with a large balance of profit with no responsibility.

Coincident with their letter to Dickinson the Corporation received a further memorial from the whole body of Bristol merchants, which they sent on to him with directions to remedy what was complained of without delay. It was not until September that they received his reply, in which he noted that they were not prepared to accept the proposal contained in his letter of July, and regarding the further complaint which they had sent him, he said he had now provided a glazed screen to be placed to windward of the light whilst making up the fire, with a view to removing the grounds of complaints of the Bristol merchants.

In conclusion he said that, if the Corporation would state the lowest annual sum they were prepared to accept for the proposed conversion to an oil light he would submit it to Mrs. Collings and the executors of her late husband. Their answer was that £500 was the lowest yearly payment for which they would bear the initial cost and the annual maintenance of the light. However, in the following January (1819) Dickinson wrote, as

principal lessee, to say that they could not agree to pay more than £281 a year. Some months later a compromise was reached, and by a deed dated 17 November the Trinity House undertook to alter and maintain the light for an annual payment of £400 for the remainder of the lease, when the lessees would surrender the property and light dues to them.

The Corporation then took over the tower and premises, and their surveyor prepared plans for the alterations. The massive, circular, stone-built tower was now increased in height from seventy to ninety feet in order to make a suitable base for a lantern and provide a service room below it, and thereon was built a lantern about ten feet high having a conical roof with ventilators, in which was a lamp of the then modern design. The oil burner in the lamp was of the type designed by the French inventor, Argand, which consisted of a cylindrical wick confined between two concentric tubes; this device gave a circular flame with a current of air passing through it, thus promoting a clear and smokeless flame. Invented in 1784, it was the first scientifically constructed burner.

The alterations to the tower made it a more imposing structure as well as increasing the geographical range of the light. The wall, six feet in thickness at its base, tapers to two and a half feet at the gallery level. Below the gallery, on the exterior, there is the inscription 'Top of Tower, rebuilt 1820.' The new light, petitioned for over so many years, was first exhibited on the night of 7 September 1820 as a fixed white light.

No account of the long negotiations would be complete without some reference to the intervention by a certain James Peters of Bristol, who, apparently unaware of the leisurely intercourse taking place between those more particularly concerned with the subject, addressed a letter dated 15 December 1817 to 'The Gentlemen Underwriters of Insurance, Lloyd's Coffee House London.' It was in the form of a memorial of the masters of vessels trading to Bristol, complaining of the inadequate light at Flat Holm and calling attention to the recent loss of *Greyhound,* packet, and that a Welsh sloop actually ran ashore on the island in consequence of the failure of the light, adding also that the ship *Ulysses* when coming up the Bristol Channel from the West Indies was 'under the necessity of firing at the Lighthouse, in order to obtain a light'!

Acknowledging his letter on 2 January the secretary of Lloyd's said that a similar representation had been made to them in 1811 and, after some correspondence with the Trinity House, it was referred to the Corporation of Bristol to forward the complaint to the lessees of the light. Peters replied expressing his regret and disappointment that it should not be in the power of the gentlemen of Lloyd's to support a cause in

which their own interests were so closely connected and that it appeared that because a similar application made in 1811 was unsuccessful they considered themselves defeated and the cause lost; whereas, with the complaints of 1811 and the present memorial in their hands they should 'return with double vigour to the charge,' and that if they had no intention of taking any action would they return his memorial in order that it might be published together with the answer from the committee of Lloyd's for the general information of those concerned.

The secretary replied in courteous terms, although obviously anxious to be rid of Mr. Peters. He returned their memorial together with a copy of the earlier letter from the Trinity House which set out the appropriate procedure to pursue if they desired an improved light. Peters returned to the charge with a memorial for them to present to the Trinity House, stating that the trade of Bristol would not agree to any additional toll for an oil light, but on the contrary they expected a better light and at the same time a reduction in the present rate. He called attention to the tonnage entered at the customhouse of inward and outward vessels at the ports of Bristol, Cardiff, Chepstow, Gloucester, etc., and the estimated revenue derived by the proprietors of the light, compared with the much lower toll for the oil light maintained by the Trinity House at Burnham.[25]

Lloyd's forwarded it to the Trinity House who replied saying that they had sent it to Mr. William Dickinson and demanding of him that he improve the light without delay. At the same time they enquired of Lloyd's from what source the memorialists had obtained the information that the annual revenue from the light was £4,000, as this was greatly in excess of the amount according to the information available to them.

When by May (1818) there was still no signs of any action being taken, and Peters having been informed that Mr. Dickinson had stated that a new tower would be needed at a cost of £1,000, he again wrote to the Trinity House stating that in his opinion the present tower was adequate and an oil light could be substituted at an expenditure of no more than £150. In reply he was just told 'that measures are now in process for causing the required improvement to be carried into effect,' and evidently having had enough of his importunities, added that Mr. Stephen Horsley, their agent at Bristol, would answer any further enquiries concerning it.

Peters, however, continued to write complaining of the delay, but was always assured that it was due only to the long negotiations with and procrastination of the lessee. In June 1820, he learned that Trinity House

[25] The light at Burnham at this time was a private one, and taken over by Trinity House in 1832 when a new tower was built.

had at last completed arrangements for taking over the light and, believing that it had been due entirely to his own efforts which should be acknowledged—and possibly rewarded—he wrote to the Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers to say that he flattered himself that he had been, in a great measure, instrumental in obtaining the improvement in the light 'for the comfort of those employed in navigating the Bristol Channel.' He went on to warn them against the possibility of an attempt to raise the dues, and added that his statement of a revenue of £4,000 against an expenditure of £500 per annum had not been contradicted.

He then had the whole of his earlier correspondence with Lloyd's and the Trinity House, together with his letter to the Society of Merchant Venturers calling attention to his own efforts, published as a pamphlet, entitled *Pro Bono Publico* price 6*d*. Not, as he observes in the preamble, from any invidious motive, but by the desire of those gentlemen who had opened a subscription in order to present him with a piece of plate for his exertions in obtaining a 'Reform in the Flat Holm Light.' So James Peters evidently was publicly rewarded for efforts which in no way affected the tardy procedure of an easygoing age in negotiations where those holding outdated privileges—of which tollgates were another example—could not readily be deprived of them.

The agreement made with the proprietors for an annual payment of £400 for maintaining the light was not destined to continue for long. Public opinion was hardening against the private ownership of lighthouses and questions were frequently asked in Parliament. As a result, an act was passed in July 1822 (George IV, Cap 111) which empowered the Trinity House to purchase outright the leases of any coast lights; this act being the precursor of the act of 1836 (William IV, Cap 79) which provided for the compulsory sale of those remaining in private ownership and vesting them in the Trinity House.

On the passing of the 1822 act the Flat Holm was one of several it was then decided to acquire and negotiations were entered into to assess the value of the remaining twelve years of the lease, and the amount was finally computed at £15,828: 18: 10[28] which was apportioned at £11,871: 14: 0 to William Dickinson and £3,957: 4: 10 to the executors of A. P. Collings.

The Trinity House took possession of the light as from 21 March 1823 and at once reduced the tolls on it by one half, and shortly after this an official exemption from any payment was made for all ships from the westward to Minehead and those bound from Swansea to Aberthaw and

[28] The Select Committee on Lighthouses, 1834, gives the purchase price at £16,057: 9: 6 but this probably included legal fees.

Barry, as it was found that the former lessees had neglected to collect dues for those voyages for many years.

In 1825 further improvements in the light were made at a cost of £1,157. The lantern was raised about five feet on a circular plinth and a fountain lamp with four concentric wicks installed. It consisted of a tank positioned above the level of the burner, the oil being gravity fed through a control valve. A heat tube was also fitted which, passing upward into the ventilator, promoted efficient ventilation of the lantern and reduced the risk of condensation forming on the inside of the lantern glazing.

In December of the same year the Board of the Trinity House noted that James Hawkins, the lightkeeper, had the assistance of his wife and that, as the duties were discharged in a satisfactory manner no additional staff was necessary. However, some years later an assistant was appointed and at the same time two substantial cottages were built adjacent to the tower. In these, for over a hundred years, successive keepers lived and brought up their families.

Although relatively inaccessible in earlier times, with the improved conditions of transport in the early part of the nineteenth century, the island became and continued for many years an attraction to visitors, and the inn a popular resort, despite the smugglers, or possibly they added to the attractions. Since the light had been acquired by the Trinity House the keepers had been appointed strictly for the service duties, the farm and inn then being leased to a tenant, who appears to have been as popular as his predecessor.

Writing some forty years after Collinson (already referred to) John Rutter in *Delineation of Somerset*, 1829, also describes Flat Holm as having a good farm and inn, and the land bearing good crops. He says that the inn afforded good accommodation and was a favorite resort in summer, and that the island was sometimes visited by the Corporation of Bristol 'who combine an agreeable aquatic excursion from the City with the exercise of their judicial rights, which extend as far into the Channel as this Island.'

The original lease of the island to William Crispe for ninety-nine years expired in March 1834, and after some lengthy negotiations with the agent for the Marquis of Bute, the freeholder of it, who now made no claim on the lighthouse buildings, but desired some compensation for a building erected beyond the premises for the accommodation of committees of inspection, a little over an acre and a quarter of ground was conveyed to the Trinity House forever, for a payment of £40: 2: 6.

Another improvement in the light was made in 1867, when a new lan-

tern fourteen feet in diameter, having helically inclined glazing bars with a glazing height of ten feet, was installed, which lantern has continued down to the present time. A cast-iron pedestal was fitted with adequate ventilating arrangement to ensure a proper supply of air to the larger oil burner, and on it a fixed dioptric lens, approximately five feet eight inches in diameter was installed. The fountain-type lamp was then replaced, but the light, greatly increased in intensity by reason of the lens, remained a fixed one.

This lamp, however, was soon afterwards replaced by an improved type pressure oil lamp comprising an oil reservoir with hydraulic type loaded piston which forced oil through a control valve to a burner having six concentric wicks, the loaded piston being restored to its initial position by hand-winding gear. In both the fountain type and the pressure oil lamps the oil container was remotely placed relative to the wick burner, owing to the intense heat set up by it. An ample supply of air was also necessary in order to promote proper and clear burning of the oil, which was provided by special ventilating arrangements in the new lantern pedestal. A burner of the capillary type where the wicks projected directly into the oil reservoir would have been quite impracticable for a lamp of the type now being used.

A Parliamentary Committee on Coastal Defence in 1860, arising out of what afterwards became known as 'the Russian scare' recommended that the River Severn should be defended by a chain of forts extending across the Bristol Channel, the southernmost one on Bream Down on the Somerset coast, two others on Steep Holm and Flat Holm, and a fourth on the Welsh coast. These were built during the succeeding five years. The one on Flat Holm consisted of four works, known as Lighthouse Battery, Farm Battery, Castle and Rock Batteries, armed in all with nine seven-inch, muzzle-loading Armstrong guns mounted on disappearing carriages, and barracks were built for fifty officers and men.

The fort on Flat Holm must have been well known far beyond the locality, and in fact, the complaints made of the damage caused by concussion when the guns were fired for practice certainly made it so. Nevertheless, its existence was an official secret, and the following now amusing story is told by an old resident of Weston. About the year 1875, his father, a commercial photographer, visited Flat Holm to take a photograph of the lighthouse for the purpose of sale. Having selected a suitable position which happened to have one of the gun pits in the foreground, he suggested to the gunner that the muzzle-loader be raised in order to give some added interest to the picture. When the photograph came to the notice

of the military authorities the unfortunate gunner was reprimanded and the sale of the photograph immediately suppressed. This picture is now reproduced with little risk of divulging an official secret! It is a recent contact print from the original negative, and therefore a tribute to the preservation of a photo negative of eighty years ago.

At the latter part of the century the Corporation of Cardiff rented a part of the island and built a small hospital for the isolation of infectious cases. It was maintained for a good many years but appears to have been used on only two or three occasions, and eventually the Corporation came to an agreement with the agent of the Bute estate to end the lease, and abandoned the buildings.

Flat Holm is of some historical interest by reason of the fact that some of the earliest experiments in wireless telegraphy were made there, Sir William Preece,[27] engineer-in-chief of the post office, having made his first telegraphic transmissions between the island and the mainland. In 1895 Marconi came to England and was introduced to Sir William, and together they made further experiments on Salisbury Plains, after which, in 1897, messages were transmitted eight miles across the Bristol Channel.

In 1900 the population of the island consisted of the tenant and innkeeper, a Lloyd's signalman, the lighthouse keepers and their families, and the garrison which by this time had been reduced to twenty. The latter, however, were all withdrawn a few years later and the barracks and batteries abandoned and allowed to become derelict.

The inn, which had been a pleasant rendezvous for so many generations, became even more popular in the latter part of the nineteenth century when Flat Holm came to be a favorite place for anglers, fish being very plentiful in the locality. Liquor was sold there at all hours regardless of the licensing laws until eventually it came to the notice of the Cardiff police. A prosecution followed, and in his defense the innkeeper said that all his life, and that of his father before him, they had sold liquor at all hours and on every day of the week, always believing that the restricted hours did not apply beyond the mainland. Although found guilty, in view of the unusual circumstances and the many years the practice had passed unnoticed, he was ordered to pay only the costs of the case. Returning to the island a wiser man, he was soon to be saddened by the diminishing attractions of the old tavern, which soon afterwards closed down after having dispensed hospitality for over a century and a half.

[27] Sir William Preece, K.C.B. (1834-1913), civil and electrical engineer, trained under Professor Faraday; one of the earliest pioneers of wireless telegraphy, long connected with H. M. Post Office, of which he became engineer-in-chief.

An incident of passing interest happened in the early part of February 1902 when Flat Holm was the scene of a remarkable phenomenon. During a night a shower of mud fell on the island and the glazing of the lighthouse was covered with a dirty white coating which stuck to the glass like glue and was only removed with great difficulty. The immediate application of water with long brushes made little impression on it, and it was not until the next day that the keepers, with hot water and leathers, were able to get the lantern clean again.

It appeared that a quantity of fine dust, believed by meteorologists to have been carried in the atmosphere from the Sahara Desert, fell on an area of about 2,000 square miles of Cornwall and the southwest of England. The mud that covered the lighthouse lantern was some of the dust converted into slime by rain clouds.

In January 1881 the light was altered from a fixed to an occulting light by the installation of clockwork operated mechanism which dropped a screen over the burner and was timed to give two occultations every half minute,[28] the character being: eclipse three seconds; light three seconds; eclipse three seconds; light twenty-one seconds. At the same time, the arc of red light over the foul ground which had been introduced many years before was retained.

The *Notice to Mariners* giving information of the impending change gave the new character in full, and then for the benefit of those not yet comprehending the meaning of an occulting light, went on to describe it to them as follows: '. . . that is to say, it will suddenly disappear for 3 seconds and then, as suddenly, reappear at full power for 3 seconds; again disappear for 3 seconds, and then reappear at full power for the remainder of the half minute.' This character has continued in use down to the present time.

Subsequent improvements were the installation of the Douglass incandescent burner in 1904,[29] and its replacement by the Hood petroleum vapor burner in 1923 which increased the candle power of the light to 35,000.[30] In 1908 a powerful compressed-air fog signal having two horns of the Rayleigh type operated by oil engine compressors was installed in a separate building erected for the purpose, giving the distinctive character of a long and a short blast every ninety seconds, namely, a blast of seven seconds, interval of three seconds, a blast of two seconds, followed

[28] At the same time the light at Avonmouth was altered from a fixed light to occulting every minute, as distinct from the half-minute period of Flat Holm Light.

[29] Designed by Sir James Nicholas Douglass, F.R.S. (1826-1898), engineer-in-chief to the Trinity House.

[30] An improvement on the above, which was developed by David Wilson Hood, C.B.E., engineer-in-chief to the Trinity House.

by an interval of seventy-eight seconds, thus giving the mariner a safeguard against the dangers in the vicinity of the island when it, or the light, was obscured by rain or fog.

In 1929 the lighthouse station was converted to what is known in the service as a rock station, which means one at which only the men on duty are attached, the families living on the mainland where, apart from the facilities for children's education, the amenities of everyday life are available. An additional keeper—increasing the number to four—was appointed to the establishment, enabling the men to serve three months on duty and then in rotation to have a month at their homes free of duty.

During the late war the island was again occupied by the military. The long-abandoned barracks were reconditioned to house an antiaircraft battery, but at the end of hostilities were again abandoned. The Trinity House soon afterwards acquired from the Bute estate the freehold of the whole island with the exception of those parts held by the War Office, of which they still retain possession. A tenant farms the island, but apart from rabbits and sea birds the only link with the past history of the island is the massive tower which ruined William Crispe two hundred years ago.

Captain William R. Chaplin has been a member of Trinity House for over thirty years and is now Senior Warden of that venerable institution. He went to Trinity House in 1928 *from the command of S. S.* Jervis Bay, *a ship which made a name for herself in the late war. Captain Chaplin has contributed several important articles to* NEPTUNE *since its inception.*

Note abstracted from a notarial record kept by Daniel Moulton of York, Maine, 1746-1784.

SALE OF ONE QUARTER PART OF A SLOOP. On 13 July 1752, John Bane of York gave a Bill of Sale to Jeremiah Bragdon of York, gentleman, for 'One Quarter Part of the good Sloop or Vessell called *The York* whereof Sylvanus Cobb is Master now employed in his Majestys Service in the Province of Nova Scotia Burthen about Eighty Tons.' The consideration was £100 Sterling.

WINDBOUND IN YORK HARBOUR. On 9 November 1751, the sloop *Three Friends,* John Simpson, master, sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, bound for North Carolina with a freight for S. Zouberbuhler, merchant in Halifax, and because of contrary winds put into York Harbour and because of continued stormy and rainy weather on 22 November 1751 did enter a 'protest' against the same.

Contributed by L. W. Jenkins

Notes on American Shipping Based on Records of the Court of the Vice-Admiralty of Jamaica, 1776-1812

BY MacEDWARD LEACH

IT is my purpose in this paper to draw attention to records of the Court of the Vice-Admiralty of Jamaica for the years just preceding, during, and following the American Revolution.[1] These records are now housed in the Public Archives at Spanish Town, Jamaica. Of most interest to Americans are the papers of the vessels seized during the Revolution and before and during the War of 1812. These papers—all removed from confiscated American vessels—consist of ships' logs, commissions, manifests, registry documents, business and personal letters. Many of these bear signatures of men famous in early American history: Washington, Penn, Rutledge, Monroe, etc. The testimony of American and British officers contains much important information bearing on the whole period.

Some idea of the importance of the material to be found in these documents can be had from the fact that during 1776 seventy-nine American vessels were seized by the British fleet in Caribbean waters and brought into Port Royal, Jamaica, to answer to various charges before the court of the Vice-Admiralty. Only four were acquitted. The vessels were confiscated, and their cargoes sold at auction. Detailed records of all these transactions are to be found in the Minute Books of the Assembly; in addition, the ships' papers belonging to sixty-two of these vessels are in the Public Archives. In 1777, 216 American vessels were seized, in 1788 the number had dropped to 153, of which thirty-eight were French engaged in running contraband into the colonies. Of course, after the war the number drops to a very few and those are charged with breeches of the navigation laws; but it picks up again in the first decade of the nineteenth century with the English-French wars. At this time the charge constantly

[1] For other materials from the Vice-Admiralty records of Jamaica, see: THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE, II (1942), 203-208, and *The Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 76 (1940), 46-55.

brought against American vessels is that they are French in disguise. For example, a vessel from Philadelphia was seized in the Windward Passage bound for South America with a general cargo. Her papers indicated that she had been built in Philadelphia, that she was owned by a Philadelphian, that she had a Philadelphia crew, and carried a cargo loaded in Philadelphia. But the Court ruled that she should be confiscated to the Crown since obviously she was French in disguise and the proof lay in the fact that her owner bore a French name—Stephen Girard.

Digests of a few of these records will show the nature and importance of the material. In 1776, the one-hundred-ton brigantine, *Ranger,* Captain Zachariah Goforth, sailed from Philadelphia with a general cargo bound for Mole St. Nicholas. She carried a crew of nine and three passengers. Her owner was Charles Biddle of Philadelphia. Her first mate was Mr. Hunter, second, James Graham, foremastman, Conrad Pink. She had been built in Massachusetts in 1771. She was charged with sailing under English colors to which she was not entitled, 'being in rebellion,' was found guilty, condemned and sold, ship and cargo. In the same year the forty-ton schooner, *Juno,* George Stokley, Captain, from Newport, Rhode Island, was captured. She was out of Dartmouth bound on a whaling voyage to the Braziles. Her owners were Barnabas Russel of Dartmouth, Moses Barlow and Ebeneazer Hammond of Rochester, Massachusetts. Edward Foster was foretopman and Tom Turner, midshipman—both of Newport. She was condemned as American property and sold.

Later in the year the one-hundred-ton brigantine, *Diligence* (alias *Two Johns,* alias *La Marie*) was captured near Cap François. Her papers indicated that she was bound for St. Pierre et Miquelon (the Court found that she was really bound for North Carolina). She had two captains, a French one, Lord Bazile, and an American one, John Bonner of North Carolina. Her cargo was gunpowder.

The sixty-ton sloop, *Mary,* Captain William White, while on a trading voyage from Providence, Rhode Island, to Cape Nicholas was captured and condemned. She carried a crew of five from Providence, four passengers and one Negro girl. The sixty-four-ton armed schooner, *Benjamin,* James Boardman, Captain, was seized by Archibald Duthie, who was a passenger, 'with the help of a boy and an old man,' and handed over to H.M.S. *Atlanta.* Duthie had been master of *Princess Royal,* captured on a trip from London to Jamaica by the American privateer, *Sturdy Beggar* and taken to America. There he had been set free and allowed to sail on *Benjamin,* bound for St. Thomas.

There is evidence here in these papers of the surreptitious trade that

was carried on between England and her rebellious colonies. *Lonely Lass*, sloop, port of Registry, Kingston, Jamaica, was captured while running contraband from Falmouth, England, to Boston.

Adventure, a two-hundred-ton ship sailing from Savannah-la-Mar, Jamaica, to England was captured by an American privateer and taken to Stonington, Connecticut, where she was sold. She then sailed under colonial colors, Captain George Coffin of Stonington, only to be recaptured and brought to Port Royal, libelled and confiscated to the Crown.

Hannah and Elizabeth, Eleazer Colfar, Captain, was captured between New London and Cap St. François. She was under commission from the state of Connecticut; her papers are signed by John Deshon, state agent.

Many of these vessels (at least twenty-one in 1777—records are not complete) were armed and several bore letters-of-marque from the various colonies or from Congress. Arms consisted usually of swivels, but some carried heavier guns. One vessel is listed as having '4 iron guns and 1 wooden.' The most heavily armed American vessel condemned at Spanish Town in 1777 was *General Gates*; she carried sixteen carriage guns and ten swivels. Another vessel had ten carriage guns, eight swivels and two cohorns (mortars).

Little detail appears in the records of the fighting between American vessels and the British. The American vessels were armed merchantmen and no match for the British ships of the line like H.M.S. *Loestoft*. The sloop *Hornet* sailing under letters-of-marque from its owner 'Congress of America,' signed by John Hancock, resisted for three quarters of an hour before capture. *General Gates* did better for she resisted for four hours and surrendered then only because her master was killed. The American *Henry* ran down upon H.M.S. *Glasgow*, thinking she was a merchantman. Upon discovering her mistake *Henry* fled to Puerto Rico chased by *Glasgow*. Unable to escape, her captain, Ambrose Weeks, ran her aground and fled inland with his crew. The British towed *Hornet* to Port Royal. She had sailed under letter-of-marque from Congress; her armament consisted of six carriage guns, six swivels and two cohorns.

For the most part these American vessels were small craft, so small, many of them, that one is filled with wonder at the intrepidity of those who ventured so far in such treacherous waters at such uncertain times. In 1777, of those whose tonnages are listed, thirteen were under twenty tons, thirty-four between twenty and fifty, twenty-four between fifty and one hundred, twelve between one hundred and two hundred. One was two hundred fifty tons. In 1778, four were under twenty tons, thirty-one between twenty and fifty, twenty-six between fifty and one hundred, four-

teen between one hundred and two hundred. One was of two hundred fifty tons and one three hundred; both were French sailing under American colors.

As one would except, most of these captured vessels are sloops and schooners. In 1777, of those whose type is indicated, forty-two are sloops, thirty-six schooners, six brigs, ten brigantines, three ships, one snow. In 1778, twenty-four are sloops, thirty-six schooners, four brigs, eleven brigantines and two ships.

The cargoes are widely varied. Ships papers and court records are very detailed. From the colonies foodstuffs comprise the usual cargo: fish, flour, onions, bread, lard, biscuit, rice, peas, and bacon. Building and cooperage materials are almost as frequently found: lumber, barrels, staves, shooks, shingles, bricks, tar, turpentine. Frequently one finds dry goods, candles, horses and tobacco. To an American the return cargoes are more interesting. One vessel captured out of Hispanola carried a cargo fit for an epicure, at any rate, hardly soldiers' fare. Among other more staple products she had preserved fruit, brandy, capers, anchovies, sugar, limes, rum, taffia and one case of manna. She also carried nails and paper. The more usual cargo consisted of molasses, rum, sugar, coffee, taffia and limes. A considerable amount of 'dry goods' went this way too, suggesting that England carried on an indirect trade with the colonies. There is frequent mention of oznaburgh (the coarse, cotton, canvas-like cloth generally used as slaves' garments throughout the Americas), duffels, cotton prints, 'surtoot coats,' linen cloth. Perhaps the colonies took good care that vessels running arms and gunpowder should arrive safely, for few vessels with such cargo are listed. One, however, from Cap François to Charleston had on board eleven brass field pieces, fifty muskets, twenty-two bbls. powder, six half bbls., ten bbls., twenty-two half bbls., and fifty quarter bbls. of cannon powder, two bbls. of fine powder as well as salt, sugar, molasses, taffia, sulfur, and paper.

Considerable information is to be found here, of course, about the British naval forces. There are records of thirty-one ships on patrol and naturally accounts of their equipment, personnel and the like. Nelson, then Lieutenant Nelson, took part in a number of these affairs. He served on several ships in the Caribbean but most of the time on *Loestoft*.

Not the least interesting are the personal and business letters often preserved among the ships' papers. Two will illustrate. The first, captured 27 April 1777, is in the papers belonging to the brigantine *Delaware*, owner William Morrison of Philadelphia. It is a letter to George Mead and Company, Philadelphia merchants, from Stephen Ceronio, merchant of Cap St. François:

An embargo has been laid on every French vessel and orders besides are come up from the General that no American vessels shall be admitted here. There [*sic*] orders have been strictly observed. All vessels that have arrived here went out of the Harbour but not far distant such as to Caracol, and to other Inlets where they have landed their cargo and the very same cargoes have been imported here under french bottoms or in flats when the vessels are not too far distant from the port. Who will not think that France has adopted such a policy in order that nothing can be imported here at the break of war! A bloody one is almost inevitable and sooner than what is generally thought. It would not surprise me that war is already declared in France by these times. There is in Havana according to the last accounts nine sails of line and ten more frigates It is said are daily there and here a considerable fleet is expected by the 15′ of next month and 6000 troops amongst which there is a regiment of Dragoons. We have no late news from Europe but the Intension of France and Spain is to fall at the first stroke on Jamaica and set the things on the same footing as they were at the Treaty of Peace of Utrecht. We expect that the first news will be decisive and if war takes place all kinds of provisions will be amazingly dear such as Flour, Rice, Shipbread, Tar Pitch & Tobacco will then be in so great demand. . . . You are Therefore to prepare yourself for fine strokes. . . . We are all very ansxious to learn some satisfactory news from your quarters. We have been much scared when we heard that General Howe being at German Town; Philadelphia is in great danger to be sure; but still I hope through the bravery of the True Sons of Liberty Howe's army will be defeated and cut to pieces. . . .

(Signed) Stephen Ceronio.

The second is somewhat more personal. It is in the papers of the schooner *Adventure,* a letter from A. Weyman to John Reid of Bordentown, New Jersey, dated August 1777.

. . . I have got me a wife since I have been hear. She is blind of an eye and I often get the blind side of her but the worst of all she is a damd slut and I intend to leave her behind for a legasey for the poor soldiers that stays behind. . . .

This is perhaps enough to illustrate the nature of this material. A careful study of the whole of it in connection with the records in the Minute Books also at Spanish Town would, it seems to me, be very fruitful indeed.

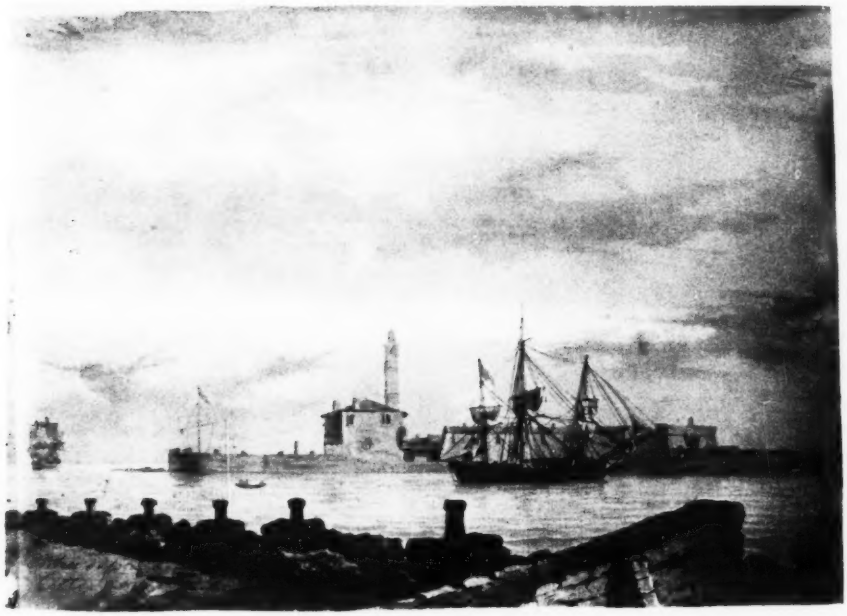
MacEdward Leach is Professor of English and Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania and Executive Secretary of the American Folklore Society. He is the author of numerous articles and books in medieval literature and of The Ballad Book. *In* 1956-1957 *he held a Fulbright Research Grant to study folklore and legends of Jamaica, of which this article is a by-product.*

THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE

Pictorial Supplement

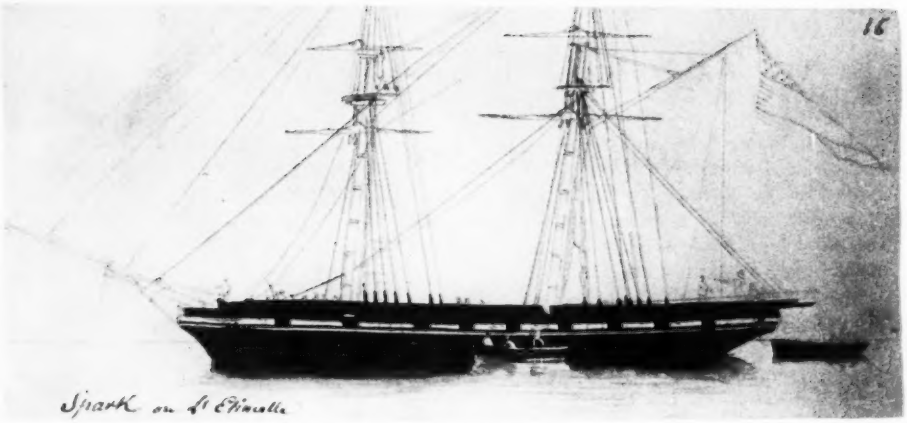
Antoine Roux Sketch Books

ALTHOUGH the ship portraits by Antoine Roux (1765-1835) of Marseilles are very well-known, to many the best of his works is to be found in sketches. A selection taken from the nineteen sketch books dated between 1790 and 1826 at The Peabody Museum of Salem, will attempt to show some of the charm and fresh vigor of his work, even though the color cannot be reproduced. His skill at topographic work and his work methods are also illustrated. The captions in French are the artist's; those in English, the editor's.

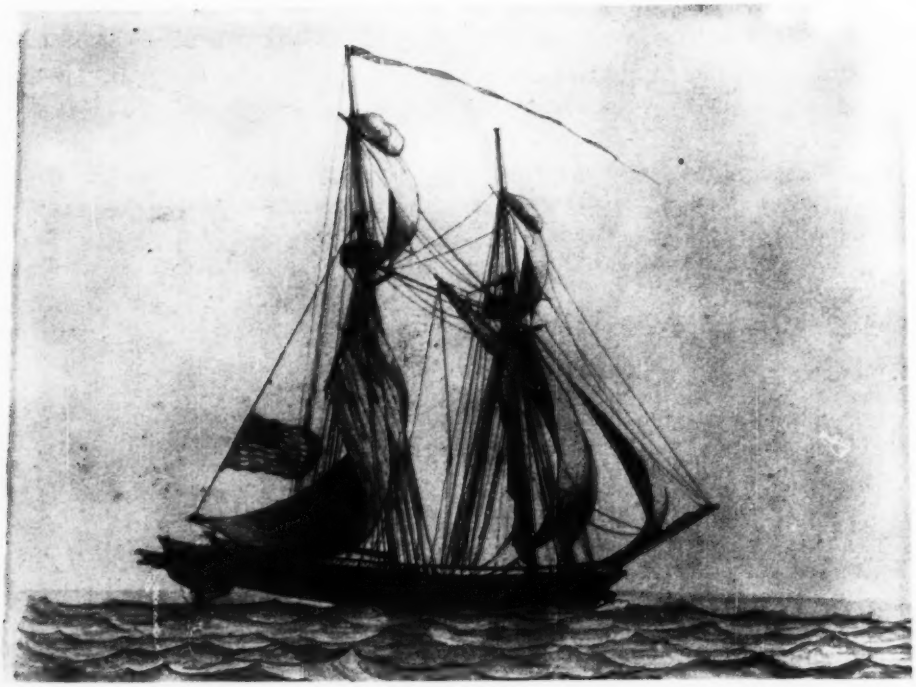


Entree du port de Cette. 1801.

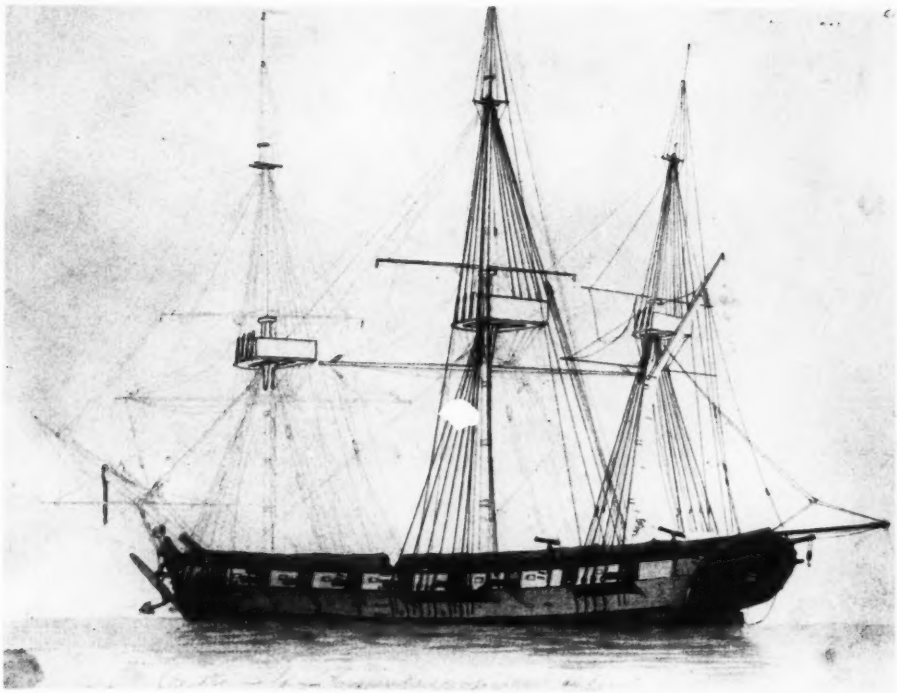
PLATE I



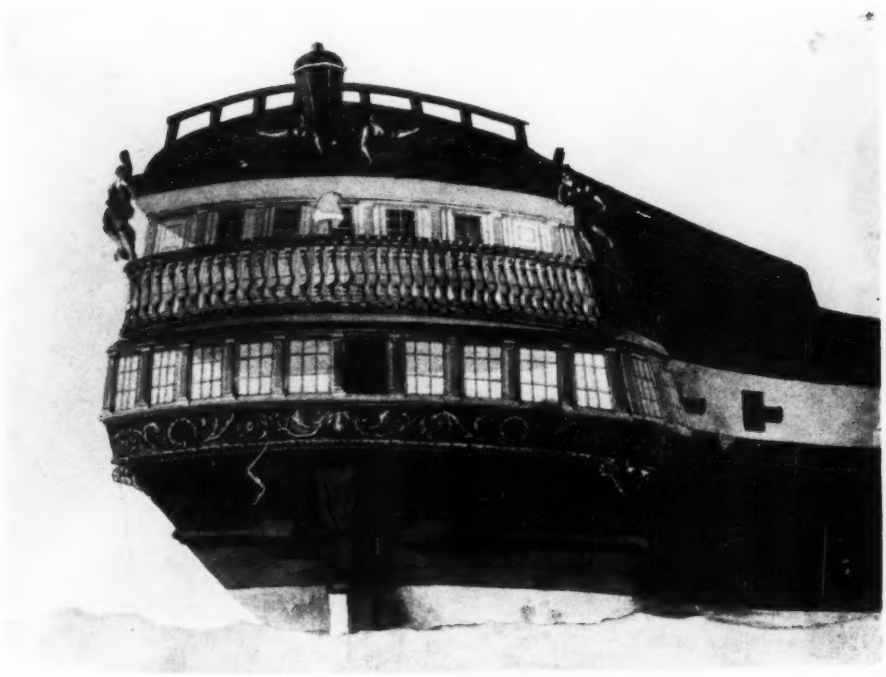
U. S. Brig *Spark* ou l'Etincelle. 1819.



Unidentified American topsail schooner. 1790.

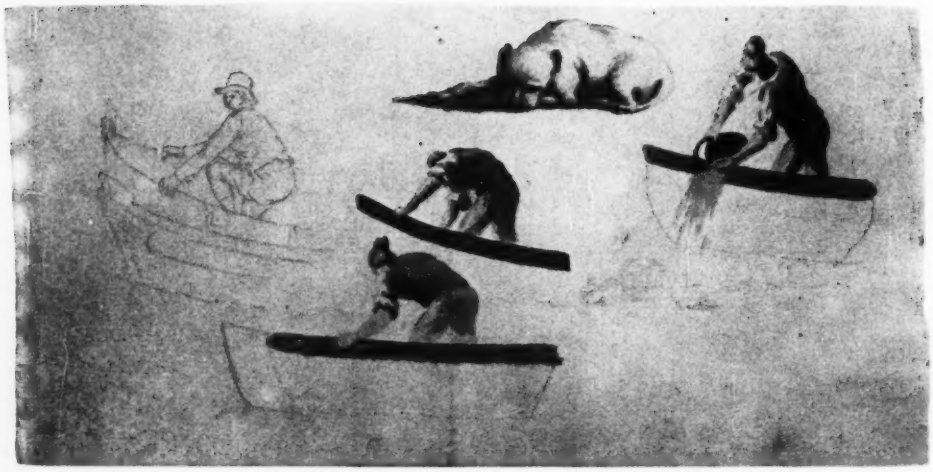


Corvette la Sanspareille prise allante au Egypte. 1801.

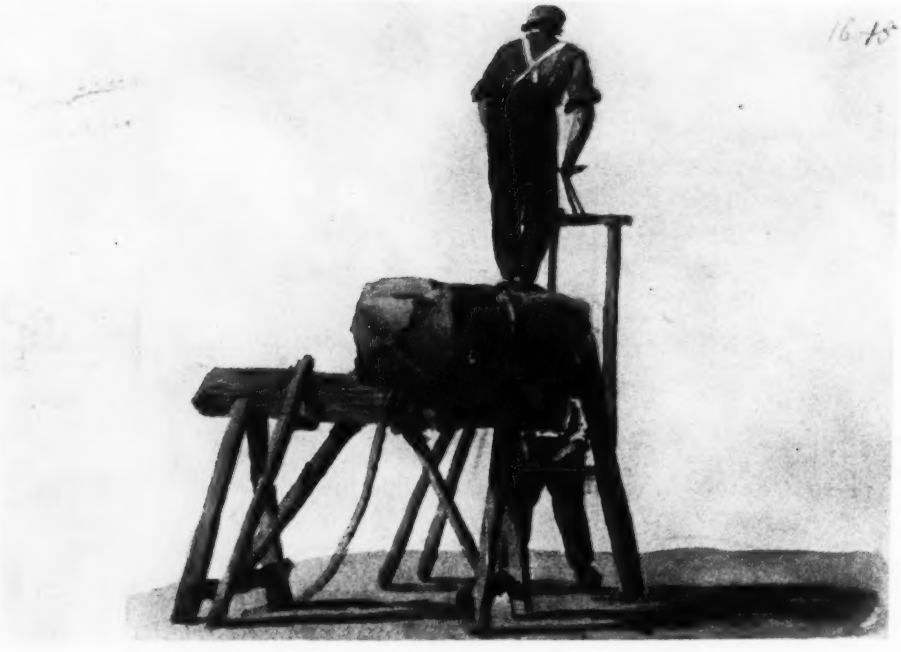


Stern of a French man-of-war. 1801.

PLATE III



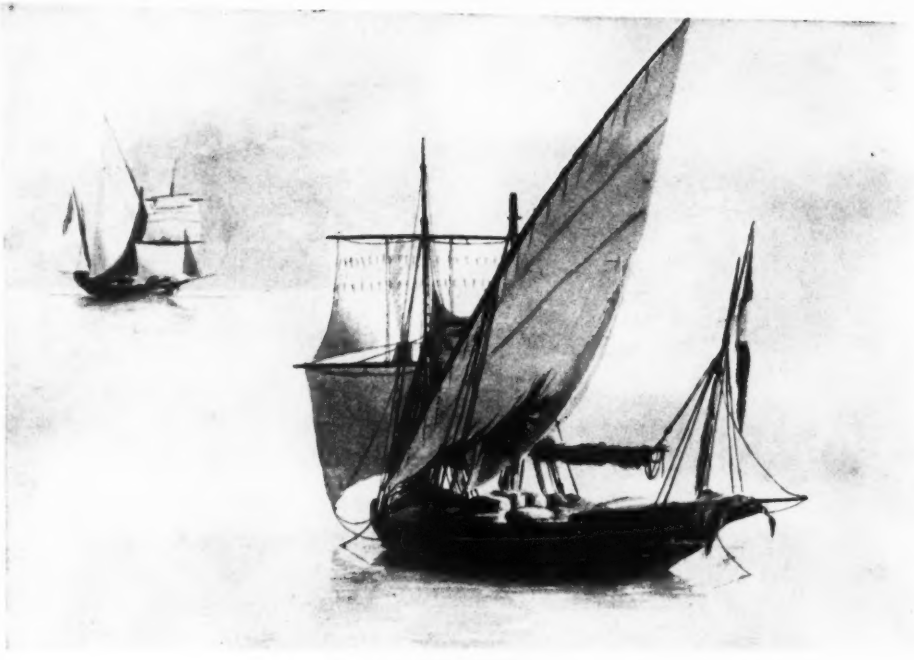
Boatmen and dog. 1810.



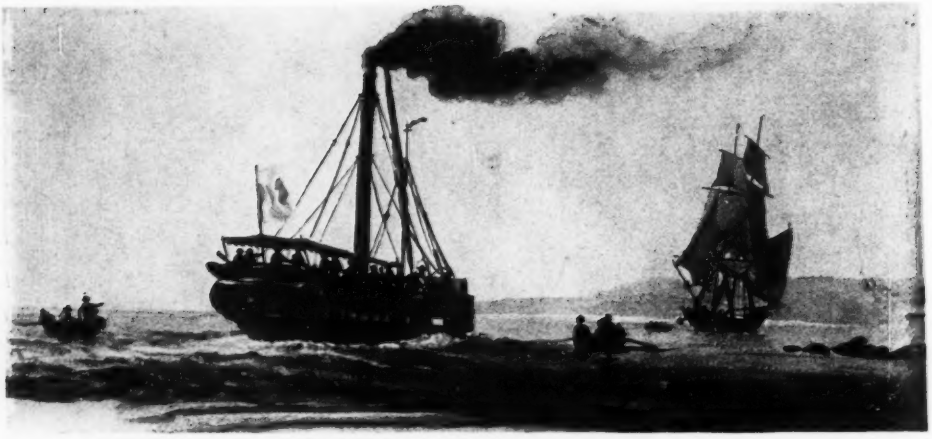
Pit sawyers. 1822.

PLATE IV

Fishermen and haul-seine. 1801.

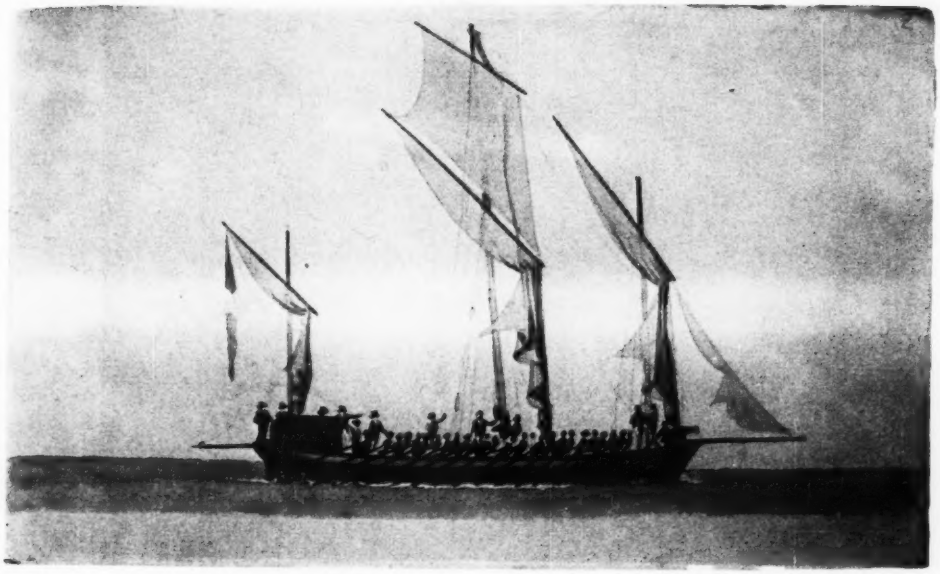


Xebecs. 1813.

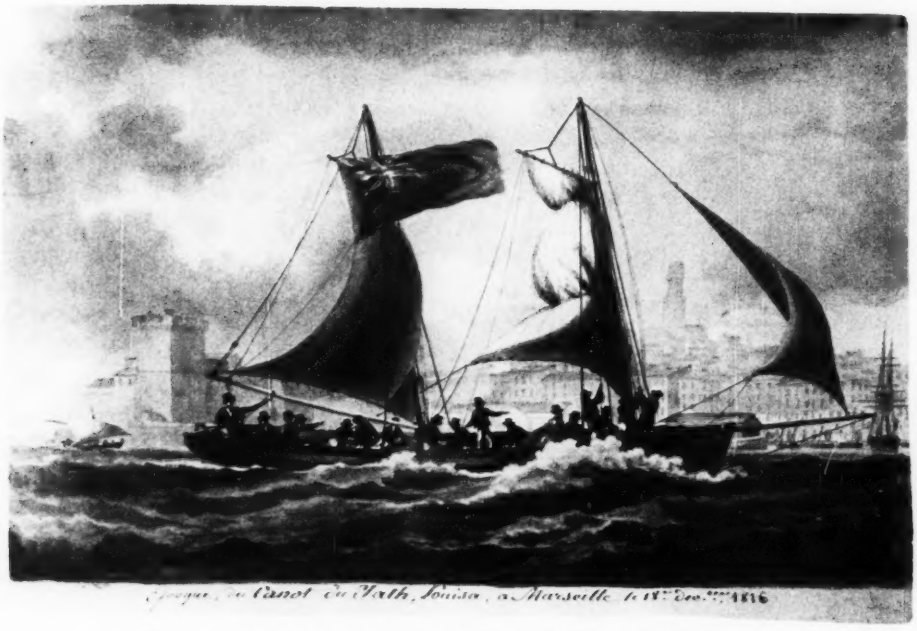


Unidentified steamboat. No date.

Topsail schooners. 1813.

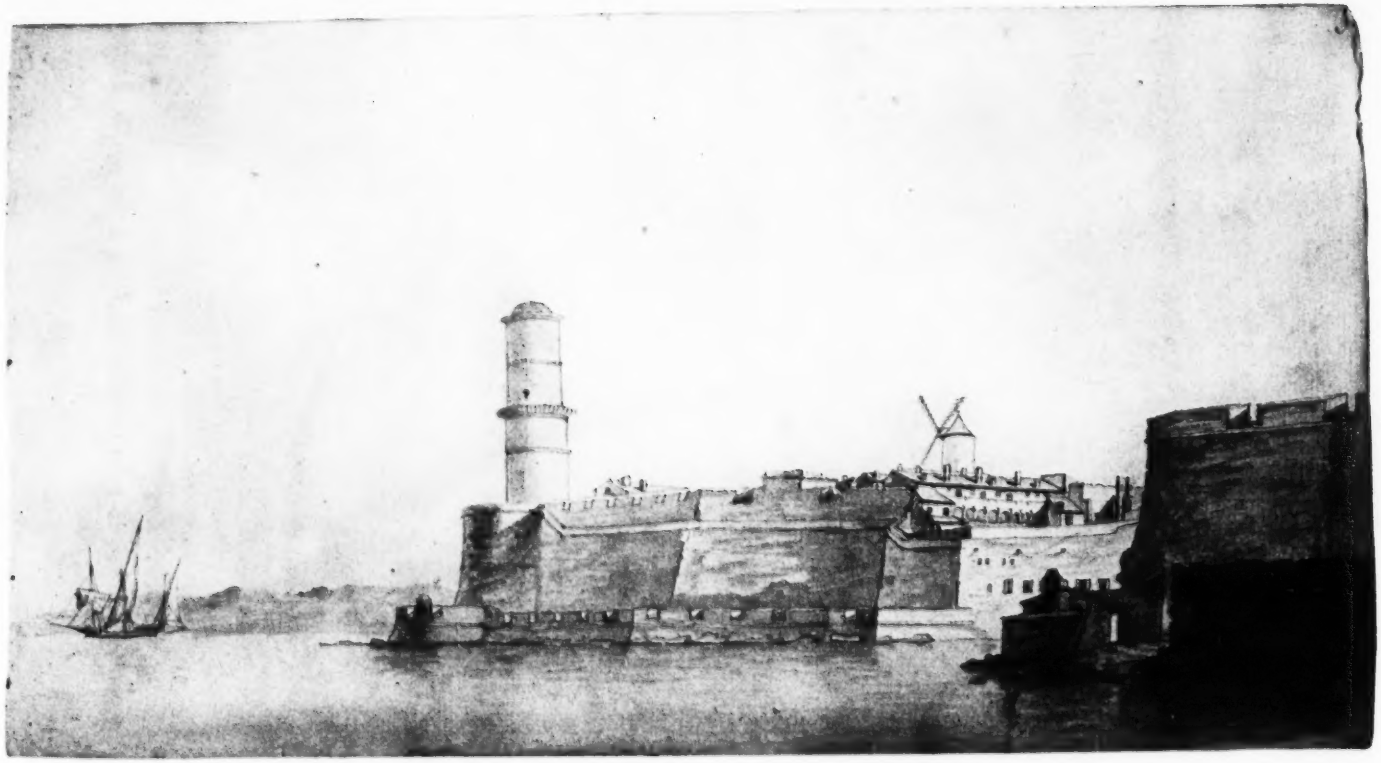


French lug rigged gunboat. 1813.



Epoque, du Canot du Yath, Louisa, a Marseille le 18m Dec.bre 1816.

PLATE VIII



Entrance to the port of Marseilles. 1790.

The Russian Fleet on the Eastern Seaboard, 1863-1864:

A Maritime Chronology[1]

BY ROBIN D. S. HIGHAM

ON 11 September 1863 watchers at the battery on lower Manhattan observed the approach of an unfamiliar vessel with the Imperial Russian ensign fluttering from her mizzen gaff. *Osliaba* was the forerunner of two Muscovite fleets then secretly on their way across the Atlantic and Pacific to the United States.

Competent diplomatic historians have now demolished the myth that the Russians were acting solely in the best interests of the Union, but no one has told the story of the maritime side of the visit.[2]

When the ships first appeared, the Union had just passed the turning points of Vicksburg and Gettysburg. The final outcome was, however, by no means clear at the time. Thus many Northerners were heartened by the thought that one major European power was friendly. Newspaper editors made guesses as to the reason for the fleet's presence, some correct and others erroneous.[3] But the myth itself, as is so often the case, seems to have grown up after the war. Both Alexander II of Russia and American politicians emphasized our obligations for the gesture of 1863 at the time of the Alaska Purchase agreement of four years later.

What really brought the fleets to New York and San Francisco was the European situation. After the Crimean War the Russians were determined never to have their fleet penned in again. At the same time they

[1] This article is primarily based on *The New York Herald*, *The New York Times*, *The Daily National Intelligencer* (of Washington, D. C.), *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Boston Daily Advertiser*, and *The Boston Daily Journal*. A rather fruitless search through the biographies and memoirs of the period revealed more confusion about chronology than accuracy.

[2] F. A. Golder, 'The Russian Fleet and the Civil War,' *American Historical Review*, XX, No. 4 (July 1915), pp. 801-812. Professor Golder had access to the Russian archives and was the first person to reveal that the Russian fleet's visit was not purely the friendly visit Americans like to think it was. The Russian historian, E. A. Adamov, in his article, 'Russia and the United States at the Time of the Civil War,' *The Journal of Modern History*, II, No. 4 (December 1930), pp. 586-611, supplements Golder and reprints the relevant documents.

[3] See Thomas A. Bailey, 'The Russian Fleet Myth Re-examined,' *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXVIII (June 1951), 81-90.

recognized that America was a friendly power with similar interests and problems. Under the circumstances Russia was anxious to maintain her friendship with the United States. Thus St. Petersburg not only indicated its willingness to sell Alaska in 1860, but also refused to be drawn into any Napoleonic schemes for mediating the American Civil War. Since Lincoln and Seward were similarly inclined in regard to interference in European affairs, Washington and St. Petersburg were in a sense allies.

Polish nationalism was simmering in the early sixties and broke into open revolt in January 1863. France at once sought Austrian and British coöperation on behalf of the Poles. But Bismarck proffered Prussian aid to the Tsar. Consequently Austria backed down. Russia's problem was thus reduced to one of Anglo-French hostility. She correctly deduced that a threat of *guerre de course* against the British merchant marine would pacify London and render Paris impotent. Thus provisional raiding instructions which had been sent to Admiral Popov of the Pacific squadron during a crisis in 1862 were renewed. In addition, the Baltic fleet was ordered to North America. This decision was taken when war appeared likely, for the Allied notes were not delivered to Russia until midsummer and no reply was made until early fall. Meanwhile the fleets were dispatched with orders governing their conduct should either war or peace eventuate.

They were sent over here because our ports were the only suitable friendly and neutral harbors. Moreover, friend and foe would each receive news of a declaration of war simultaneously, while the two Russian admirals could remain in telegraphic touch until the moment of departure. Should war not break out, the Russian admirals were to scout British and French colonies and trade routes, compiling intelligence reports for future reference.

Lessovsky, commander of the Baltic fleet, received his orders from Minister of Marine N. K. Krabbe. These were published in 1930 along with the Tsar's covering letter. They cover only the Russian objectives of the cruise in the light of European events. But American visitors after the Civil War were shown a document in Russian which Alexander II stated was the secret orders issued to Lessovsky in July 1863. Though no such document has been unearthed, this does not preclude the possibility that the Russian admiral had secret orders to report to Lincoln if France and Britain intervened in the American Civil War. (Thurlow Weed, for one, supports this view in the story quoted below.) Open sympathy for the South existed in both France and England at the time, and it was only after the Baltic fleet was at sea that Lord John Russell ordered the seizure of the notorious Laird rams. Sealed orders are frequently destroyed when

no occasion for their perusal arises. Thus the admiral's copy was probably destroyed in 1864. The Tsar's draft, having been kept close at hand for the benefit of visitors, may easily have been lost.[4] After all, the proper Maine boundary map of 1783 was not discovered until 1936!

At the time of the Alaska Purchase treaty it was alleged that the United States had to pay $5,000,000 more than the 1860 price for 'Seward's ice-box' because that was the cost to the Imperial treasury for the naval demonstration of 1863-1864. If that is true, such a sum would not have been unreasonable for keeping a dozen warships abroad for nine months.[5]

Though a state of crisis had existed since at least January 1863, vessels of the Baltic fleet were out of repair. *Izumrud* and *Jahont* (or *Zemchug*) had to be dry-docked and never did sail.[6] The others were delayed for, not counting *Osliaba* in the Mediterranean, only five of the twelve vessels in the Baltic fleet were operational. *General-Admiral*, the largest wooden vessel afloat, was apparently *hors de combat*, even though she had only been completed by William Webb of New York in 1859. She may also have been excluded from the fleet as being too difficult to disguise.

Though at first Americans seem to have had nothing but praise for the appearance of the fleet, the vessels were in poor condition when they left Cronstadt in August. Ill-fitting sails, leaky hulls, warped ports, bad food and an outbreak of scurvy made the Atlantic voyage uncomfortable. Moreover, the voyage was attenuated because a standing rule in the Russian navy forbade the use of the engines except in an emergency. Compared with the Union Navy of the day, and even with the Russians' own *Warrior*-class ironclad *Pervenetz* launched at London in May 1863, the vessels of the fleet were obsolescent. Fortunately, by the time they arrived in New York, the likelihood of war was fading fast.

Even before the last of the fleet reached Manhattan in the second week

[4] F. L. Schuman, *American Policy Towards Russia since 1917* (New York, 1928), pp. 19-20, says there were sealed orders. Also, Thomas Willin Balch, *The Alabama Arbitration* (Philadelphia, 1900), for the story that ex-Governor Andrew G. Curtin of Pennsylvania was shown the instructions supposedly issued in July 1863.

[5] Benjamin Platt Thomas, *Russo-American Relations, 1815-1867*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Historical and Political Science, Series XLVIII, No. 2 (1930), pp. 163-164. The assertion was made by Senator Dawes that Lincoln and Seward had agreed to pay for the visit out of contingent funds, but Lincoln's death occurred before the transaction was completed. Though apparently there is no documentary evidence of this design, one cannot but speculate that it might have been envisaged. The Russians were so delayed in sailing that a visit, which would have been of incalculable value to the Union in the first half of 1863, had lost much of its purpose after Gettysburg.

[6] Confusion arises as to the names of the Russian vessels left to be repaired at Cronstadt. Two or possibly three vessels were expected to join Lessovsky in New York in addition to *Almaz*, which arrived in early October. Adamov (see note 2 above) mentions *Zemchug* as being dry-docked for repairs and *Izumrud* as having been repaired and sailing in August. Neither of these appear to have reached America. Probably they merely joined the normal Baltic patrols as the crisis was passed before they were ready. Other writers and the newspapers mention *Isoumvoud* or *Isomvod*, probably meaning *Izumrud*, and *Jahont* or *Ishount*. Carl Sandburg in his *Abraham Lincoln: the War Years* (New York, 1939), II, 521, also mentions a *Witzas*—a note-reading error for *Vitiaz*?

of October, the primary Russian reason for being here had virtually evaporated. Nor was the visit by then essential to the Union cause.

Ships of the fleet left Cronstadt individually, as if to relieve the usual Baltic patrols. Sailing independently they rendezvoused with colliers off Bornholm and coaled. Then they proceeded by the seldom-used Little Belt Passage to the North Sea and north about into the Atlantic.[7]

While they were on their way across, *Osliaba* was completing her voyage from Greece. She called at Cadiz in August for news and arrived at New York after a leisurely twenty-two-day passage from Spain. On Friday, 11 September 1863,[8] she exchanged salutes with the fort on Governor's Island and proceeded to anchor off the battery. A typical product of the pre-ironclad steam screw warship, this 2,800-tonner carried thirty-three 64-pounders, though pierced for forty, and a heavily mounted swivel in the bow. The *New York Herald* noted her 'beautiful little steam screw launch.' By the time the news was relayed to Washington this little vessel had grown to a steel-plated launch capable of carrying three guns and 200 men—a veritable LCI![9] In addition to Captain Boutakoff, *Osliaba* carried seventeen officers, two surgeons, two masters, an assistant (captain's clerk?), and five engineers as well as a crew of 450 sailors and marines.

They were soon visited by a city committee offering hospitality, by General John A. Dix commanding the New York area, and by Mrs. Lincoln, then grieving in New Jersey. The President's wife caused something of an international storm by proposing the health of the Tsar while aboard.[10]

On the twenty-third *Variag* and *Vitiaz* arrived from Kiel (so they said) from whence they had departed on 6 August. These corvettes were each of 2,100 tons with 300-horsepower engines. Armed with seventeen guns, each carried sixteen officers, eleven cadets, and a crew of 316 men.

On the following day the flagship, *Alexander Nevsky*, and the clipper, or sloop-of-war, *Peresvet* made a more spectacular entry. They approached

[7] Patrick Laurentz, a former lieutenant in the Imperial Russian Army, in his article, 'Visit of the Russian Squadrons in 1863,' *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, LXI, No. 5 (May 1935), pp. 692-696, is the source for this statement. Unfortunately *Proceedings* articles carry no documentation, but it would appear to be a reasonable route under the circumstances.

[8] Most writers appear to have taken their chronology from *Harper's Weekly*, which did not report the arrival of *Osliaba* until the issue of 3 October 1863. The dates in this article have been taken from the shipping news columns of the daily papers and are, therefore, much more accurate. The first of the Pacific fleet to arrive at San Francisco was *Novich*. She was wrecked on the rocks off the Golden Gate on 26 September. The last, *Ryanda*, arrived from Hokodadi, Japan, on 8 November 1863.

[9] *Daily National Intelligencer*, 14 September 1863, 3c.

[10] Jay Monaghan, *Diplomat in Carpet Slippers: Abraham Lincoln deals with foreign affairs* (New York, 1945), pp. 325-332. Biographies of Mary Todd Lincoln I was able to consult are notable for their complete ignorance of this episode. See also the *New York Herald*, 26 September 1863, 6d. Woldman (see note 22 below), 147, moves the incident to Washington and December.

through Long Island Sound and made the tricky Hell Gate passage into the East River and thence past cheering throngs downstream to drop their hooks off the battery. For the flagship this was not the first excitement of the trip, for on the way over she had participated in an ocean rescue, taking off the Americans in the crew of the foundering Norwegian ship *Louisiana* and returning them to their own country.

Alexander Nevsky of 4,500 tons, carried twenty-four long and twenty-seven medium 60-pounders. In addition to the admiral and his two staff officers, the normal complement was twenty-three officers and 759 sailors and marines. *Peresvet* carried fifteen long and thirty-three medium 60-pounders, thirty-six officers and a crew of 560. *Osliaba* and the two larger vessels were painted black with a white band around the gundeck against which the black squares of the ports stood out. The hulls of the two small corvettes were unrelieved black. At the mizzen gaff of each flew the Imperial ensign, white with a saltire azure.

In late September it was still expected that three more warships would join the squadron: *Almaz, Isoumvoud* and *Ishount* (or *Jahont*). Of the three, only *Almaz* of nine guns reached New York, and that on 12 October.

Though this was the first visit of a Russian fleet to the eastern seaboard, it was not the first time that Russian warships had visited the United States. Admiral Popov, commanding the Pacific squadron, had been in San Francisco in 1862 and was about to return there. Moreover, two Russian warships had been constructed in New York itself by the preëminent William H. Webb. He had launched in 1858 the 4,600-ton *General-Admiral,* the largest wooden ship afloat, and the shallow-draft steamer *Japanese* for the Amur River squadron.[11]

No sooner were the flagship and its consort safely anchored in the North River than speculations and rumors as to the purpose of their visit flew abroad. Were they on their way to the South Atlantic or here to cool Napoleon's ardor? Well, at any rate they were friends.

Though *Osliaba* had impressed the *Herald*'s reporter, he described the new arrivals less glowingly. The sailors were scruffy, the officers unusual, the armament obsolete and, by the officers' admissions, the gun crews below par. But a few days in harbor and a steady deck soon mended matters. Sailors appeared in blue blouses and white duck trousers, officers in green uniforms, and guns in polish. Though at first the officers took to going ashore in mufti, they were soon well known for they insisted on paying for everything in gold. Nor would they acknowledge that greenbacks were at

[11] See Frederick M. Binder, 'American Shipbuilding and Russian Naval Power, 1837-1846,' *Military Affairs,* XXI, No. 2 (Summer 1957), pp. 79-84, for the story of the Russian purchase of *Kamchatka* in 1841 from R. and G. L. Schuyler of Jersey City for $400,000.

discount. Such magnanimity naturally stimulated a solicitous interest in their welfare.[12]

Almost at once festivities began. The Common Council of the city offered the hospitality of New York. Baron von der Osten Sacken, the Russian consul-general, shepherded the admiral and his officers to City Hall to present them to Mayor George Opdyke. And James B. Eads, the St. Louis ironclad builder, gave a great banquet in their honor which Farragut attended. The American admiral was staying temporarily at the Astor House, and after a civic reception on 30 September, Lessovsky called upon him there.

As midshipmen in the 1820's they had known each other in the Mediterranean and now renewed confidences. Politician first-class Thurlow Weed was present at one of their meetings. And he relayed to his friend Secretary Seward the Russian's response to the inevitable query. 'I am here,' said Lessovsky, 'under sealed orders to be broken only in a contingency that has not yet occurred. . . . I have received orders to break the seals, if during the Rebellion the United States becomes involved in a war with foreign nations.'[13] His urgent request for strict confidence was granted, for not even the *Herald* got wind of this news.

In the meantime the Russian officers toured the harbor, now sheltering Admiral Milne, R.N., with H.M. Ship-of-the-line *Nile,* steam frigate *Immortalité* and dispatch boat *Nimble.* The French steam frigate *Guerrière* was also below. After the harbor and the sights of New York, the Russians visited the Governor in Albany, and journeyed on to Niagara Falls. Some of them ranged as far afield as Meade's headquarters in Virginia, while others contented themselves with checking the port lights of Greene Street.

Baron Edouard de Stoeckl, the Russian minister, came up from Washington to enjoy the fun. The cities of Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Portland, Maine, sent delegations to invite the gallant Muscovites to visit their municipalities. The Russian surgeons visited the New York Academy of Medicine and the physicians and surgeons enjoyed a collation aboard one of the warships. Lessovsky made himself popular in declining an invitation from the Board of Commissioners of Pilots by saying he had

[12] The *New York Herald,* 26 September 1863, 7a & b. At a later date the *Herald* noted that the Russian seamen had a lot to learn from Americans and were not, unfortunately, comparable to British and French matelots. But then, said the *Herald*'s editorial, what could be expected from peasant draftees? (14 October 1863, 6.)

[13] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed including his autobiography and a memoir* (Boston, 1884), pp. 346-347. Both Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: the War Years,* II, 526, and Charles Lee Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut* (Annapolis, 1943), II, 217, make use of this incident almost verbatim from Barnes.

to take all his officers to pay homage to Farragut as 'the most remarkable and most successful naval leader of the age. . . .' On 20 October a magnificent municipal banquet was given for the officers. A few invitations were sent to the other 56 warships in port. Most of them sent an officer or two, but the French declined on principle. The last great social event ashore was a ball at the Academy of Music on 5 November. Tickets were $15 each and the whole affair is said to have cost $45,000. Not without some reason did *Harper's Weekly* raise the cry of 'shoddy.' The editor suggested an appropriate sequel would be a ball for the Sanitary Commission, at the end of which the ladies present should donate their jewelry to the fund for aid to Union casualties.

The Russians were too polite to accept all this hospitality without returning it. On 10 November they gave a ball on *Alexander Nevsky* at which the dancing alone lasted for eleven hours. In addition, on the day the fleet sailed, Lessovsky sent Mayor Opdyke $4,700 for the poor of the city.

Not all of the stay in New York was so pleasant. On the day after the city ball, 6 November, a gale caused one of the frigates to drag her anchors. She was driven against the bulkhead of Pier 13, struck and sank a lighter moored there, and stove in her own stern. Tugs managed to get her back into the stream, but, as she had now lost her hooks, she was taken to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. There she was able to partake of the hospitality extended in September to Stoeckl by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles.

The fleet weighed from New York on 27 November and arrived at Hampton Roads a few days later. On the afternoon of 2 December *Osliaba,* acting as flagship, as *Alexander Nevsky* was of too great draft, *Variag, Vitiaz* and *Almaz* dropped anchor in the Potomac off Alexandria. As Lincoln was ill in bed, Seward received Lessovsky on the fifth. Two days later the cabinet visited the fleet and the Russian officers were wined and dined by the Secretary of State. Another night Baron de Stoeckl entertained American dignitaries. And on a third Secretary Welles held a reception at his house in the Russians' honor for some fifty people, including ministers from all the foreign legations. Lincoln's secretary John Hay noted in his diary after this affair that 'The Officers of the Russian Fleet . . . have vast absorbent powers and are fiendishly ugly. I grieve to say that Mme Lissovski is not an exception.'[14]

Unofficial hospitality was not up to that of the secretaries. Few parties were given and a local laundry burnt the officers' clothing. Moreover,

[14] Tyler Dennett, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York, 1939), p. 134. For the visit to Washington see also Margaret Leech, *Reveille in Washington, 1860-1865* (New York, 1941), pp. 282-283; *The Diary of Gideon Welles* (Boston, 1911), I, 480-481 (an item which is not indexed).

Washingtonians were mortified when the Board of Aldermen refused to approve the Common Council's resolution offering the hospitality of the metropolis to the distinguished visitors.

On Sunday the thirteenth, a warm and balmy day, a Congressional party embarked in launches at the navy yard and were taken down to a banquet aboard *Osliaba*. Six senators, fifty-seven representatives, the Clerk of the House and their wives, were under the direction of Speaker Schuyler Colfax. A great banquet, prepared by Delmonico of New York, was the main event, followed by dancing on the spar deck.

A few days later the *Daily National Intelligencer* recorded a similarly grand and jovial reception aboard *Osliaba* to Admiral Farragut and other officers. It was three days before the paper discovered it was a hoax perpetrated by some Union Navy wag.[15]

On 18 December Assistant-Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox told General Benjamin Butler, commanding at Fortress Monroe, that the Russians would winter there.[16] On the afternoon of the nineteenth the President and Mrs. Lincoln held a brief reception at the White House. This concluded the formalities, and shortly thereafter the fleet dropped down the Potomac again. A week later the river was closed by ice.

Butler welcomed Lessovsky on the twenty-sixth and offered him all facilities. For his part the Russian indicated that he would winter his vessels at Annapolis and Hampton Roads, while he himself would go to the West Indies.[17] In fact, only *Osliaba* stayed off Fortress Monroe. On 10 January 1864 *Alexander Nevsky*, *Peresvet*, and *Vitiaz* left for the West Indies. On the twenty-eighth *Almaz* and *Variag* proceeded to Annapolis.

As early as 6 January mail for the Muscovites began to arrive in Annapolis, then a major port for the exchange of prisoners. (The Naval Academy was at this time at Newport, Rhode Island; the buildings being used as a Union hospital.) Owing to an outbreak of smallpox ashore and the closing of the harbor by ice, it was the twenty-ninth before the two smaller Russian vessels arrived. On Saturday the thirtieth they fired a salute and a battery on the Academy wharf returned it. Officers from both ships then landed and paid an informal call on the local Union Army commander. Thereafter the warships were thrown open to inspection and the sailors swarmed ashore.

Just a week after *Almaz* and *Variag* anchored at Annapolis the fleet suffered its second casualty in America. Late in September one tar had fallen

[15] The *Daily National Intelligencer*, 18 December 1863, 3c, and 21 December, 3b.

[16] *Private and Official Papers of General Benjamin F. Butler* (privately printed, 1917), III, 223.

[17] The *New York Herald*, 29 December 1863, 1c.

overboard and drowned in New York harbor. Another would die in Boston. In the Maryland case the deceased reached his resting place with American help. He was shot by a local restaurateur outside the east gate of the Academy. The murderer was promptly jailed, but later freed under $2,000 bail by writ of habeas corpus. The dead man was duly escorted on his last voyage by American servicemen and Maryland legislators.

Meanwhile, the Governor gave a reception for the Russian officers at which bands from the Union Army, Baltimore, and the Russian warships played. On Wednesday, 23 February, members of the legislature visited the warships and presented the Russians with a handsomely engrossed complimentary scroll containing resolutions of welcome and granting the officers the privileges of members of the legislature. Whether the Muscovites understood that this made them democrats has not been recorded!

On the twenty-seventh, the ice having melted sufficiently to allow maritime intercourse with Baltimore, *Almaz* steamed to that port and anchored off the Lazaretto. Shortly thereafter she was taken in hand for repairs, which were completed by 6 April when she sailed for New York.

Variag remained at Annapolis. On 3 March the legislature held an informal reception for her officers. After a visit to the Senate, the Governor conducted them to the House. The Speaker introduced the members and the party then adjourned to the library for 'wine, wit, and sentiment.' At eventide two days later *Variag* sailed for Hampton Roads under orders to join Lessovsky at Havana, but she never did.

Meanwhile, Lessovsky had lost his flagship as *Alexander Nevsky* had had to return to New York with her engines disabled. She arrived off Manhattan on 23 February and remained in port until early June. In early March the Italian warship *Re Galantuomo,* which had come over to escort home the new Webb-built frigate *Re D'Italia,* sailed. She was soon reported in distress. Almost at once various warships were ordered to sea, while New York merchants chartered a search ship of their own.

Variag had not yet cleared the capes of the Chesapeake when she was ordered to find *Re Galantuomo.* She sailed about 18 March and after a fruitless period at sea, put into Bermuda to find that the Italian had managed to reach Gibraltar.

Having carried out the twin duties of gaining information and spreading amity, in the spring the fleet began to reassemble in New York. *Almaz* arrived from Baltimore on 9 April. *Osliaba* from Hampton Roads on the thirteenth. *Peresvet,* having spent some of the winter at Havana, arrived on the nineteenth from St. Thomas, Danish Virgin Islands. The next day

Vitiaz arrived from Santiago (St. Jago), Cuba. *Variag* returned from Bermuda on 17 May.

The winter was not without incident. General Butler had an irritating correspondence with higher authorities over a Russian deserter. He found one, who was forwarded to Secretary of War Stanton. After being shipped to New York, this man was returned as 'unknown.' Butler then found another who did fill the bill.[18]

During a gale on her voyage north *Osliaba* came upon the British merchantman *Czar* in difficulties. Naturally, such a name demanded help and a tow was passed. Assistance was rendered until *Osliaba*'s coal gave out and both hawsers parted. Captain Boutakoff then sailed on to New York and dispatched a tug which was successful in bringing the dismasted Englishman into port.

In addition to repairs to *Alexander Nevsky*, *Variag* also had some troubles. On 20 May she was hauled up, armament and all, onto Nicholson's Great Balance Dock at the foot of Pike Street on the East River, where William Webb then supervised her repairs.

By this time orders were on their way for the fleet's recall. The last pleasures, and the most intellectual, were fast drawing nigh, for three of the fleet were off to Boston. There the officers were appropriately wined, dined, and educated as befitted those who were the guests of the Hub of the Universe.

Peresvet was signaled off the port of Boston at sunrise on Sunday 22 May. In the forenoon she came up to Quarantine, dropped anchor, and exchanged salutes with the revenue cutter. But as her commander wished to paint her, she remained below till the latter part of the week. On Monday *Vitiaz* came into the bay. The following Friday she moved up and anchored off Central Wharf. *Peresvet*, glowingly described as one of the most beautiful ships ever to have come up Boston Harbor, also anchored off the wharves that day. On Saturday Lessovsky arrived in *Osliaba* after visiting Provincetown.

Alderman Richard Henry Dana, father of the author, and his committee put off to *Osliaba* on Sunday and renewed orally the formal invitation issued the previous fall.

On Monday morning the program started. Thirty-two Russian officers were taken to the Athenæum, to the Public Library, and to be introduced by Consul-General Storer to both the Mayor of Boston and to the Governor and his Council. They were also whisked through a compass maker's, a rifle works, and a piano factory. After a visit to the brand-new City Hos-

[18] *Private and Official Papers of General Benjamin F. Butler*, III, 502-503, 563 and 595.

pital, dinner was served at the Parker House. The next few days were equally brisk: a factory in Lawrence, the National Convention of Christian Associations, the public schools, the Exchange, the Natural History Society, Harvard University, the suburbs of Mount Auburn, the forts and reformatories in the harbor, etc. They dined with the Ancient and Honourable Artillery Company at Faneuil Hall and with the city at the Revere House. They saw Maggie Mitchell in *Katy O'Sheal: an Irish Lion out on a Spree,* listened to a Camilla Urso concert, and climaxed it all by going to the Music Hall to be serenaded by 1,200 of Boston's school children.

Unfortunately for all, the recall orders arrived.[19] Madame Lessovsky was placed on the next ship home. The admiral made a quick train trip to New York to make final arrangements, while early in June *Peresvet* sailed down for a few days, perhaps to exchange some crewmen. Those seamen who remained in Boston marched to the Common for a collation put on by the city and to be photographed. A sailor who tripped going aboard one night and broke his head on the chains was buried after a day of mourning and weeping by his comrades. The officers made their final tours; to Newport and its naval base and to East Boston and Donald McKay's yard. Visits were paid to the fleet by the citizens and farewells said.

On the sixteenth *Osliaba* and *Peresvet* dropped down and waited in the outer harbor for *Vitiaz*. She was experimenting with raising steam with smokeless anthracite instead of bituminous coal. Unable to do it, she lost the tide and was delayed until the next day, when all set sail together for Cronstadt.

Of the remaining three warships, *Almaz* appears to have left New York sometime before 3 June, probably for the Mediterranean. *Variag* and *Alexander Nevsky* were still under repair on that date, but were not listed among foreign warships present on the twenty-fifth when a *Herald* reporter visited two recently arrived Spanish frigates.[20]

A year later Commodore Thomas T. Craven, U.S.N., in *Niagara* escorted the remains of the Russian Grand Duke from Lisbon to Flushing Roadstead, Holland. At that time Lessovsky was back in *Alexander Nevsky* with *Almaz* in company and stationed in the Mediterranean.

In Russia itself great appreciation was felt for the friendly way in which the fleet had been treated in the United States. Cassius Marcellus Clay, the

[19] The *New York Herald,* 3 June 1864, 8c.

[20] It is possible that they were still under repair on this date and so not counted as being in the harbor. However, they were under orders for the Mediterranean and a search of the *Herald* and the *Times* to the end of August 1864 revealed no further news of their whereabouts. It was not the practice of many newspapers to indicate the departure of warships, though arrivals were regularly noted. By May 1865 *Almaz* and *Alexander Nevsky* were on the Mediterranean station with Lessovsky in command. (See *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies,* I, iii, pp. 515 and 529).

American minister at St. Petersburg, received a formal call from Lessovsky and his officers upon their return in mid-August. This was followed by an invitation to visit the fleet, which he did on Saturday the twentieth. As the ships lay below Cronstadt, the Imperial yacht carried Clay and his party down from St. Petersburg. Every ship flew the American flag at the main and the American party was given a formal cannon salute. After a tour of *Osliaba,* an elegant collation was served and Lincoln was toasted while the band played 'Yankee Doodle.' The Russians persisting in the belief that this was the national anthem.[21]

Though Americans were not to learn the true purpose of the visit until Professor Golder visited the Russian archives in 1915, it was on the whole a success.[22] Both Russian officers and American statesmen avoided European and American problems, stressing instead the similarities in their situations and their mutual friendship. This in itself may have done much to perpetuate the myth that the fleet was sent over purely as an amicable gesture. Nevertheless, Russia was genuinely interested in America. The Tsar saw clearly that the Union must be preserved as a counterweight to anti-Slavic machinations in Europe. Moreover, the Crimean War had shown the vulnerability of Alaska to both British and American imperialism. The visit of the fleets was a useful diplomatic lever when the sale to Seward was finally agreed upon in 1867.

Bearing in mind the fact that Lessovsky's mission was pro-American, yet for purposes primarily Russian, what was its effect on the struggle here? Undeniably it boosted morale in some areas of the North while no doubt having a depressing effect on the minds of those Southerners who heard of it. Apart from this, it may have further dampened Anglo-French intentions to help the South. But it should be remembered that Russell had already seized the Laird rams before he heard the Russians were in New York. Even before that, the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863 had severely weakened British sympathy for the South. The military turning point in the American struggle had been reached before the Russians left the Baltic. By the time the fleet departed, victory was but a matter of months.

21 *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, 1864), III, 286-296.

22 See note 2 above. For the older view of the visit consult James Morton Callahan, 'Russo-American Relations during the Civil War,' *University of West Virginia Studies in American History* (Morgantown, 1908), No. 1, pp. 1-18. There have been two recent studies of Russo-American relations not already mentioned above: Albert S. Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians* (New York, 1952), makes use of good sources, but the author is careless with chronology as far as the visit of the fleet is concerned; Alexandre Tarsaidzé, *Czars and Presidents: the Story of a Forgotten Friendship* (New York, 1958), deals in a genial way with the episode.

A search of the National Archives has failed to reveal any unpublished materials directly pertaining to the naval side of the visit apart from a thank-you note to the Coast Survey for charts. As far as can be determined, no intelligence reports were submitted to the Navy Department by any of the American naval officers who visited the Russian ships during their stay here.

From a naval viewpoint, the Russian action was well justified. The fleet was useless for operations against the concentrated Royal Navy or even against the French. It was too weak to fight and too easily blockaded in the Baltic or Black Seas. If war had been declared, the ships stood a reasonable chance of breaking out of American ports and of wreaking considerable havoc upon the large and scattered English merchant marine. There was also, as Senator Sumner pointed out to John Bright, the tempting target of Napoleon III's supply lines to Mexico. Even without war, it was high time the Ministry of Marine in St. Petersburg acquired accurate reports on potential enemy colonies, garrisons, and trade. And, as Tsushima was to demonstrate some years later, every fleet needs to go to sea from time to time just to keep its sea legs.

Lastly, though the fleet made neither a great contribution to the American conflict nor were its operations here of an unusual nature, the presence of Popov and Lessovsky did have an important effect in Europe. Their two small squadrons became fleets-in-being once they escaped from their own easily blockaded ports. Britain backed down on the Polish affair as soon as she knew the Russians were out and France was forced to follow suit. The Tsar sent the two allies a strong note, which he would not have dared to have sent in midsummer, and that ended the affair. The fleet remained here because its presence was useful to Russia. It departed in mid-1864 when its orders had been carried out.

Robin D. S. Higham was born in England and spent part of his childhood in the Isle of Wight watching the Royal Navy and the Cunarders pass in and out. After serving as a pilot in the R.A.F.V.R. in World War II, he returned to America and graduated cum laude *from Harvard in* 1950. *He then taught at the Webb School of California, took a Master's degree at the Claremont Graduate School, spent two years as Professor Albion's assistant at Harvard and obtained his doctorate there in* 1957. *He has taught at the University of Massachusetts and is currently on the faculty of the University of North Carolina. He has written a number of articles in the field of maritime and aeronautical history and currently has two books,* Imperial Air Routes, 1918-1939, *and* The British Rigid Airship Programme, 1908-1931, *being published in England for Spring and Fall* 1960 *respectively. This is his second article for the* NEPTUNE.

Documents

A Little Night Music

No. 240 Legation of the United States
Lima, Peru November 14. 1869

To the
Honorable Hamilton Fish
Secretary of State of the United States.

Sir:

I sincerely regret that I am obliged to inform you of the following circumstances.

At about two o'clock on the morning of the 3rd instant, Captains Thornton and Eastman, commanding respectively the United States men-of-war *Kearsage* and *Nyack* anchored at that time in the bay of Callao, thought proper to call their crews to quarters, and for the purpose of testing the efficiency of the discipline on board, proceeded to discharge some of their heavy ordnance.

No notice whatsoever of this design had been given to the local authorities of the port, and no permission had been requested for the same.

The alarm caused by the unexpected firing was very great, all the troops in Callao were put under arms, the shore batteries were manned, the guns loaded, and even the President of the Republic, aroused in Lima by a telegram, ordered the garrison of this capital to be ready to march at a moments notice. These movements were induced by the ignorance of the Prefect and other officers of Callao, as to what was transpiring in the bay, it being feared that a revolution had taken place on board of the Peruvian squadron. The greatest agitation prevailed until the truth was known and then an indignant message was sent by the Prefect to the United States commanders, in consequence of which, they, on the following day, made the most ample apologies to that functionary for their misconduct.

The gravity of the affair will, perhaps be better understood from the accompanying translation and copies of the note I have received on the subject from the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The offense committed by the American officers has excited general reprobation here, it being considered as conveying not only a serious insult to the dignity of Peru, but also as a departure from the commonest rules of courtesy and usage.

It has placed this Legation in the disagreeable necessity of making an apology for an affair that certainly reflects discredit on the offending parties. I await for the reply to this communication before making any further representations to his Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The President of the Republic was so seriously annoyed at the occurrence, that only by the solicitation of the Minister, the note to me from the Department of Foreign Affairs, was not couched in exceedingly strong language.

It certainly appears that officers of the United States Navy, having been stationed here for some time, well aware of the desire of disaffected persons to improve any opportunity for the purpose of inaugurating revolution, and well acquainted with the customs of the port, should not have allowed themselves to commit such an indiscretion.

I have the honor to be,
With great respect
Your obt servant

H. M. Brent

Contributed by
Captain Edgar K. Thompson, U.S.N.

Seaman's Clothing

In an abstract log of the clipper ship *Thatcher Magoun* for the years 1862 to 1866 at the Peabody Museum of Salem is to be found a listing of the slops purchased by Captain Otis Baker, her master, for the crew. These purchases give a good idea of the costume worn by the common seaman of the time, the cost to the skipper and to the hands. The margin of profit would make Macys or Gimbles envious, especially with captive customers, no overhead, or credit losses.

Blue Flannel Shirts	$13.50 p doz	$2.00
Red do	13.50	2.00
Whalm [?] drawers	7.50	1.00
singlets	7.50	1.00
Wollen socks	1.75	•
Oil Suits	18.00	3.50
Southwester	3.00	.62
Dungaree Pants	4.50	.62
Frocks	4.50	.62
Gurnsey "	10.00	1.75
Caps	5.00	.85
Hats	9.00	1.50
Pants	40.00	6.00
Do Plad	18.00	3.00
Knives	3.00	.50
Boots Green	42.00	5.00
" Calf	30.00	4.00
Shoes	13.50	2.25
Nippers [Woolen mittens]	•	.75pr.

• Not given.

Contributed by M. V. Brewington

Notes

The Weight of a Whaleboat

For well over two hundred years the Yankee whaleboat has been admiringly described, with especial emphasis on its lightness as well as on the elegance of its form. In 1725 the Hon. Paul Dudley of Massachusetts Bay wrote home to the Royal Society in London ('An essay upon the natural history of whales . . . ,' *Philosophical Transactions*, 33, 387, pp. 256-269, London, 1726) a very good account of the more conspicuous whales of New England, and in describing 'The Way and Manner of killing Whales' says (pp. 262-263): 'Only I would take notice of the Boats our Whale-men use in going from the Shoar after the Whale: They are made of Cedar Clapboards, and so very light, that two Men can conveniently carry them, and yet they are twenty Feet long, and carry six Men, viz. the Harponeer in the Fore-part of the Boat, four Oar-men, and the Steersman.' Although boats later became about half again as long, and sometimes even longer (cf. 'Mitman & Beetle 1943,' American Neptune, III, No. 4, pp. 350-352), the unqualified statement that two men could walk away with one has persisted. Even W. M. Davis, whose first-hand statements are usually objective and reliable, says (1874, *Nimrod of the Sea*, Ch. 13, p. 158), after a good description of a twenty-eight-foot whaleboat: 'Here we have a boat which two men may lift. . . .' J. T. Brown in 1887 (*Fisheries and fishery industries of the United States*, section 5, vol. 2, pp. 241-242) gives dimensions of whaleboats on page 241, and on page 242, without mentioning length, he says: 'Messrs. Reeves and Kelley, boat-builders of New London, tell me that the boats of their manufacture weigh from 500 to 550 pounds.' From the context, one might assume that Brown is speaking of 28- and 30-foot boats, although this is not stated.

Although we are accustomed to think of our forebears as iron men, I have marveled some at the idea of two of these marching off 'conveniently' with 250 or more pounds apiece, even if fortified with wagers and rum. Accordingly, not easily finding more specific data, we applied to the Mystic Seaport for permission to weigh one of their museum pieces, and October 1958, weighed the present waist boat of *Charles W. Morgan*. This, Mr. Stackpole tells me, is a beetle boat of about 1890, recently authentically restored at the Seaport with perhaps 2/3 new cedar planking, and with not more than two coats of paint. It is a smooth-bottomed 'batten boat,' with ceiling. The boat was very dry, having been long on the cranes with the plug out. Its length over all is 28 feet 4 inches, beam 6 feet 4 inches, and depth about 23 inches. It has a centerboard trunk, and was weighed empty of all equipment, without even the rudder; the loggerhead was in it. We weighed it roughly by inserting a calibrated dynamometer below each falls, hoisting the boat clear of the cranes. The reading was 1,000 pounds (453 kg.) ± 10 pounds.

It seems clear that this can be taken as pretty near a minimum weight for a working whaleboat of the middle and latter nineteenth century, and it seems equally clear that the boat those two celebrated sailors carried conveniently was no longer than 20 feet, which one would expect to weigh at least 400 pounds (about 180 kg.) if of comparable construction.

Although not much is said about this in most whaling yarns, it appears that in the American whale fishery the boat was ordinarily lowered and hoisted with only the two end men in it, the other four getting in after it was waterborne, and climbing up the side of the ship be-

fore it was hoisted. This is well shown in a picture by Benjamin Russell, 'Taking up the boats,' belonging to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and also in a charcoal drawing of C. W. Ashley's shown on page 295 of the first edition of his *Yankee Whaler*, 1926, where five men may be seen heaving pretty hard hoisting the bow of a whaleboat, in which stands a man apparently hauling on the gig tackle. The effort the five men are making looks like better than half a ton on a five-part tackle, which raises the question: How heavy was the gear and craft in the boat? Brown, on the page (242) just cited, gives 1,528 pounds as the loaded weight (without crew) of the whaleboat (length not stated) then on exhibition in the United States National Museum; perhaps it is from this figure that Ashley (at the end of chapter 7 of the *Yankee Whaler*, 1926) derives his 1,000 pounds of gear in a 500- to 600-pound boat. Dr. R. C. Murphy has told me (in litt., 13 November 1958) from his own experience that 'it is quite customary for other members of the crew to slide down the tackles or to scramble down the slideboards before the boat reaches the water, and it is even more likely, especially in a rough sea, that the entire crew will he hoisted out of reach of the water before they escape from the boat and clamber over the bulwarks. Very frequently, of course, the bottom of a boat will be more or less aslop with water.'

It would be welcome if some whaling museum curator would publish the weights of the equipment of a whaleboat, both craft and gear, even though these would, like our boat weight, be minimum with everything dry. We might then, adding 350 or 1,000 pounds for the two or six men, have some idea of the work done by the eight-inch timber davits and of the weight supported by the frail and elegant whaleboat when being hoisted.

We are grateful to Mr. Edouard A. Stackpole and Captain James C. Kleinschmidt of the Mystic Seaport for their cordial help when we weighed the boat, as well as to Mr. Philip Purrington of the New Bedford Whaling Museum for showing me Russell's picture.

WILLIAM E. SCHEVILL

The Origin of the Marconi Rig

I

Dr. LeBaron Bowen puts the introduction of the Marconi rig a little too late when he writes that 'it did not appear until the 1920's.' (R. L. Bowen, Jr., 'The Origins of Fore-and-Aft Rigs,' American Neptune, XIX, 1959, p. 177.) *The Yachting Monthly* of August 1913 prints a photograph of Anker's *Mosquito* with the new rig and it appears in several designs during the next few months.

My recollection is that in England Linton Hope and Warrington Baden-Powell introduced it simultaneously as a rig for sailing canoes in the winter of 1912-1913 and argued somewhat acrimoniously as to priority. In Baden-Powell's case it was certainly a direct development from the rig with an almost vertical and slightly curved gaff, for he started by fixing the gaff to prevent its twisting to leeward and then made the mast and gaff into a single spar with the same slight curve towards the head.

R. C. ANDERSON

II

I had intended to comment on the matter of the Marconi rig mentioned in Dr. Bowen's article in the American Neptune, referring to W. P. Steven's use of the jib-headed mainsail in 1895 and of Hanan's use a bit later, as well as a reference to the history of the 'Marconi' mast. However, I find Ham De Fontaine has forestalled me with a letter in the last issue of the *Maine Coast Fisherman* (Vol. 14, No. 2, September 1959, editorial page, p. 6) in reference to statements by Rowland as to the history of the rig.

The confusion about the Bermuda rig is not cleared by the Neptune article. (R. L. Bowen, Jr., 'The Origin of Fore-

and-Aft Rigs,' AMERICAN NEPTUNE, XIX, 1959, p. 171.) I am not certain that I can add much without causing more confusion.

In the first place, the type of hull and rig known in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was the gaff-rigged topsail sloop whose hull is represented in Chapman's 'Navalis Architecturia Mercatoria' and which I reproduced in *The Baltimore Clipper*. Another example, of later date, is the Admiralty draught of *Lady Hammond* that I redrew and published in *American Sailing Craft*, New York City, 1936. *Mediator* that the NEPTUNE published in July 1953, though American built, is near enough to the Bermuda sloop of 1750-1760 in hull and rig to be representative. This is the older 'Jamaica Sloop' of the eighteenth-century West Indian pirates in process of development.

The jib-headed sloop rig of the Bermudas is another matter entirely. Folkard, referred to by Bowen, is confusing in that he appears to place the introduction of the 'sloop' rig in Bermuda at far too late a date. I think he must be referring to the extreme racing rig. The Bermuda schooner-boats seem to have employed jib-headed sails occasionally but were usually gaff-rigged—Fincham in his work on masting gives tables for the 'Bermuda' schooner.

The jib-headed main and jib sloop-rig of Bermuda seems to have become known in England soon after the Napoleonic Wars were over. Cooke, the English engraver, made sketches of the Bermuda sloops, which I saw in England in 1955. I believe these were published in *Yatching Monthly* in the 1930's but unfortunately I do not have this reference. I also saw two sets of lines and a sail plan of these Bermudians; one in the National Maritime Museum. I believe that the jib-headed Bermuda sloop we now call the Bermuda rig was in use in small boats contemporary with the jib-headed schooner rig there—say 1810 anyway. I suppose the schooner rig, jib-headed, may have been the development from that Dutch carpenter's boat but who can prove continuous existence of the rig in Bermuda? I have yet to prove there was continuous use of the jib-headed sail on the Chesapeake though one can make at least a reasonable assumption on existing evidence. I see no inherent difficulty in going from a two-mast to a one-mast rig—boatbuilders and owners are not so hidebound as not to take this step on occasion. Create the need or excuse and the change seems to take place.

I think the Bermuda jib-headed rig originally had a club at the head of the sail. Folkard's plate (page opp. 275, *The Sailing Boat*, H. C. Folkard, London, 1863, 3rd edition) shows the club and some of the older sail plans indicate it. Dixon Kemp (*Manual of Yacht and Boat Sailing*, page 384, London, 1886, 5th edition) shows a headboard in *Diamond*. However, attention should be called to the 'boom' of these sloops—it is in fact a sprit with its heel extended forward of the mast and set up with a heel tackle, very much like the New Haven sharpies' sprit though the Bermudian has her sprit in a boom position rather than across the sail sharpie-fashion.

When an attempt is made to connect the sharpie with the Bermudian sail and rig on the basis of the sail form and sprit I think we must enter the wild blue yonder of pure speculation. (Bowen, p. 176.) As I have stated in *American Small Sailing Craft*, New York City, 1951, the basic rig forms were developed abroad prior to American use and therefore there was a rather wide selection available to the American colonial sailor. I am therefore reluctant to form conclusions as to origin and relationship of small-craft rigs on evidence of American usage.

I wish to comment also on the colonial *'catch'* (Bowen, p. 181). It is common practice, I may safely say, to consider the *catch* to be a variation of the naval bomb ketch, in rig at least. I don't believe this to be correct. Without going into detail, the records show that colonial New England *catches* were not only below 30

tons register but with crews of only four men made voyages to the West Indies. Such small crews could not handle anything approaching the bomb ketch in rig. It is also a curious fact that the classification of *catch* is rather suddenly replaced by *scooner* in New England Customs records of 1710-1720. Surely this cannot be explained by the claim that all ketches were replaced by schooners in a decade or so. I am inclined to consider the possibility that the colonial catch was some kind of a fore-and-after. Perhaps the 'two-mast' boat, or shallop, with a jib added, for example. But one thing can be said with reasonable certainty, the colonial *catch* was not the bomb-ketch rig, later used in some royal yachts, small naval craft and in a few merchant vessels of the eighteenth century.

As to the rig of the Baltimore clipper schooner, I doubt any connection with the leg-of-mutton there. (Bowen, p. 182.) It is true of course, that the Baltimore clipper schooners of 1800 and later had sails of rather great hoist and the mainsail and main gaff topsail together did take a leg-of-mutton appearance. But this does not appear to have been the case before, roughly, 1800, judging by what information is now available.

I am not so sure, now, what the relation was between the Norfolk pilot boats and the clipper schooners in hull and rig. (Bowen, p. 182.) It is now plain that there was a distinct difference in hull-form, rig, as well as size, between these two as early as 1780 anyway. There are too many serious gaps in evidence to make speculation safe.

HOWARD I. CHAPELLE

The Rake of Bugeye Masts

In his 'The Origins of Fore-and-Aft Rigs' (American Neptune, XIX, 1959, p. 176), Dr. Bowen brings up the question of the extreme rake in the masts of the Chesapeake Bay bugeyes. Some sixty odd years ago, I was told that these masts were so raked in order to lift the booms well clear of the wave tops when sailing down wind under rolling conditions. In other words, the angle of the rake, more or less, added to the angle to which they were steeved when sheeted home, brought them well up as the sheets were eased off. To me this seems quite logical, especially for the bugeye whose leg-of-mutton sails wore relatively long booms which would call for considerable topping in blustery downhill going. Yet why, some may ask, rake the masts when the booms may easily be brought up, as needs be, by means of the topping lifts. The answer is that a relatively flat sail is far less likely to jibe when it is all out than a sail with the imposed fullness brought on by the use of the topping lift.

Once the boats had acquired these strong rakes—for whatever reason—one might well believe that they persisted for the sake of balance. In any triangular sail, such as the jib-headed Marconi, where the mast is practically perpendicular, the center of effort of the sail travels a considerable distance forward as the sail is reefed down. Thus the lead of the center of effort of the rig, over the center of lateral resistance of the underbody of the hull, is drastically increased, whereas it should actually be reduced somewhat as the center of effort comes down toward the water plane. Were the sail so placed and proportioned that the foot was parallel to the water plane and the luff and leech of equal length (with the head exactly above the mid-point of the foot), the center of effort would come directly down and there would be no change in lead.

To be sure, the old-timers who developed and sailed these craft did not think of balance in such terms. But they must have found, and appreciated, the kindly behavior of their vessels when sailing under their strongly raked rigs.

FREDERIC A. FENGER

More on 'Piggin Sticks'

Ever since the reference appeared in your July 1958 issue regarding 'piggin sticks,' I have not been satisfied with the explanation offered by Captain Campbell. While nautical dictionaries agree with the definition of piggin as stated, none have anything to say about stick.

The American Philological Association Transactions for 1886 states 'piggin' is a southern expression meaning a small wooden vessel with an erect handle, used as a dipper. This same source says it is also a wooden vessel like a half-barrel, with one stave longer than the rest to serve as a handle. Another reference holds that it is a wooden or earthen vessel used as a drinking cup. None makes any reference to 'stick.'

Piggin is a diminutive of pig and comes from the Lowland Scotch meaning an earthen or wooden vessel or pitcher. There are four degrees of drunkenness, the worst being pig drunk. There are four kinds of wine, the strongest being pig wine (*vin de porceau*). In olden days, it was the custom to preserve these wines in particular vessels to distinguish them. Pig could have been used for pig wine. I have the feeling that 'stick' was used as a stirrer, measurer or tally.

While 'stick' was undoubtedly used as an attribute of 'piggin,' I believe it was a separate and distinct article and not the name for the erect handle or long stave of the vessel. I have a feeling we must look to the land and not the sea for the explanation of 'stick' as employed with piggin.

When time permits I shall pursue the matter further but for the moment I contribute the above for consideration.

CAPTAIN EDGAR K. THOMPSON, U.S.N.

Note abstracted from a notarial record kept by Daniel Moulton of York, Maine, 1746-1784.

Wrecked on Boone Island. On 2 November 1748, the sloop *Industry*, Robert McKown, master, sailed from Arrowsick, in Georgetown, in the county of York, bound for Boston, having on board a few passengers and loaded with staves in the hold and cordwood and two masts on deck. The wind was 'at North West which continued so till the next Day and blew excessive hard and a rough Sea so that they were obliged to throw some of the Wood overboard. And making an Island off of York Harbour called Boone Island they kept close to the wind endeavouring if possible to Weather the said Island but finding it impractable bore away & endeavouring to fall to Leward of the same Struck upon a Ledge that lay off at the Eastward of the said Island at about half after one on the Third instant, where she stuck fast & immovable only by the force of the Sea & remained so notwithstanding the mast & boom was cut away. In the evening those on board left her much shattered and arrived in their boat at York the next morning supposing the said sloop by that time to be much Hurt if not Intirely Ruined.'

Robert McKown, master, John McKinly, mate, and James Clarke, seaman, made oath to the above 4 November 1748.

Contributed by L. W. Jenkins

Book Reviews

D. ALAN STEVENSON, *The World's Lighthouses Before 1820* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959). 9" x 1 ", cloth. xxiv + 310 pages, 197 illustrations. $10.10.

This handsomely produced volume is worthy of its title, as it records the early history of the coast lights of every maritime country. A description of the lighthouses of antiquity, and the early and primitive efforts to give guidance and warning of danger to mariners approaching the land, is followed by an account of the lighthouses of the medieval period. Thereafter, sections deal with the progress in lighthouse work for the years 1590 to 1820.

The former year was evidently taken as the time from which coastal lights have had a continuous existence, and 1820 as marking the time when the last of the primitive lights were being replaced following the inventions of the civil engineer. This period of two hundred and thirty years is divided into four sections to which arbitrary dates are given, but each forms a stage in the gradual development of the lighthouse.

Part 2 presents a more detailed account of every lighthouse in each country. Arranged chronologically, the relative progress is more readily seen, and the varying methods employed to overcome the difficulties of local conditions. In the earlier years more lights were on the coasts bordering the North Sea and principally on the east coast of England. This was inevitable by reason of the amount of sea-borne traffic, and the vast areas of sandbanks and shoals.

Considerable prominence is given to the Eddystone and Bell Rock lighthouses, and not without reason. Not only are extant the records and narratives of their builders, John Smeaton of the former, and Robert Stevenson of the latter, but they stand out as two of the most remarkable feats of engineering of that period, considering their isolated positions, the hazards of wind and sea, the more primitive tools and lack of mechanical appliances and, not least of all, that the only transport for all the material was by small sailing craft and open boats.

Part 3 is given to a more particular description of illuminants, the early coal fires and the efforts to improve them by better grates, and the trials of coals to discover which kind produced the most flame. The candle alone remained fairly constant, and incapable of much improvement. The era of the whale-oil lamp made possible the introduction of the first reflector light.

In this age of electricity and artificial light of great power, so readily available, and even produced in remote places, it is difficult to realize that a little over a century and a half ago, the coal fire, in use for hundreds of years, was still the best light a lighthouse could produce, and the only alternative was the tallow candle or the crude lamps burning whale oil, which gave as much acrid smoke as flame, and that it was not until 1845 that rapeseed replaced the ever-decreasing supply of

whale oil, and not until the latter half of the last century that mineral oil became available.

In earlier times it was not possible to give a character to a light, enabling one to be distinguished from another, and it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that mechanism made possible a revolving light. The need of being able to tell one from another had long been appreciated, but the only method available was by multiplicity of lights.

The most notable instance of this was at the approaches to the English Channel, where, if vessels during misty weather failed to see the single light at the Scilly Islands, the two lights on Lizard Head would soon show them their position. If they were many miles out in their reckoning, as was so often the case, and to the southward of their track, the three lights on the Caskets warned them of their danger.

That English lighthouse dues in former times provided a revenue for the maintenance of aged seamen and those maimed in the ever-recurring wars appears very odd in this age (after the Napoleonic wars, the Trinity House was maintaining from its revenue no less than seven thousand pensioners). Less altruistic, however, were the patents to court favorites who, and their successors also, derived a handsome revenue from the dues. It was not until 1836 that all these private lights came under the control of Trinity House, and the revenue of the light dues was assigned to lighthouse maintenance.

This is not an account of the hardships of the lighthouse keeper, of lonely watches in remote places, or of life in a light vessel, straining at her cables within sight of the breakers, nor of the mariners in storm-battered ships, searching the horizon for the welcoming beam of the light. As the author observes, only so far as the facts presented speak for themselves does the book touch upon the romance that attaches to these old lights. Nevertheless, a wealth of history and romance can be found in the efforts of those who devote their life's work to serving their fellow men.

It is inevitable that in such a comprehensive work a few errors should creep in, but those concerning lights are of such minor importance as not to be worth quoting. However, the statement (p. 233) that in 1809 chain cables for light vessels were made by Huddart & Co., and that a 'pecularity' was the use of leather to protect them, is very misleading.

Leather to protect iron chain would indeed be peculiar. Captain Joseph Huddart was at no time associated with the making of iron chain, but was the inventor of a machine which by a new process, and driven by a steam engine by James Watt (pioneer of the steam engine), made ships' cables and rope of greater strength and higher quality than had hitherto been possible. On his death the machine was acquired by the Naval Dockyard at Deptford, and used until the end of the hempen cable era.

Chain cables came into use only gradually in the second decade of the century, due to some extent, no doubt, to conservatism but certainly to distrust of their low qualities, and it was not until 1830 that the last hempen cables in the Naval Service in Britain were replaced by chain ones.

Trinity House first used chain cables for light vessels in 1823, and it was still some years before the last hempen ones were abolished. It is true that the earliest light vessels had a short length of chain attached to the anchor, to which the hemp-

en cable was bent by the established practice of a round turn, a half hitch, and the end stopped back by a lashing. The length of chain always remained on the sea bed.

In the light vessels, and in fact in all vessels when at anchor it was the practice to parcel the cable with old canvas where it lay in the hawse pipe, to avoid chafing the cable. In heavy weather when the canvas quickly wore through, it was necessary to parcel another section inboard and then veer it into the hawse pipe. From this procedure arose the expression, 'to freshen the nip.'

In the light vessels, always at anchor, it was the practice to add to the parceling a length of leather, or more frequently, a green hide to further protect the cable. This explains the use of leather alluded to.

This comment, touching upon a point which the eagle eye of the maritime historian would not have missed, is on a subject outside the theme of the book, which is a remarkably interesting account of the development of the lighthouse through the ages. Written by a fourth generation of lighthouse engineers, himself no less eminent than his forebears in the development of aids to the navigator, Mr. Stevenson has garnered extensively from the records of his own family and many others, and from lighthouse authorities as well as the archives of other countries, material for the most complete history of the subject. This volume, with its two hundred illustrations, the collection surely of many years of research, will for all time remain a standard work.

W. R. CHAPLIN

Trinity House, London

ROLAND BARKER, *Tusitala: The Story of a Voyage in the Last of America's Square Riggers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959). 5¾" x 8⅜", cloth. 192 pages, 13 illustrations. $3.95.

This is the best account of an actual voyage aboard a windjammer that has come out in recent years, and since it is of the last commercial voyage of a square-rigger under the American flag, it marks a suitable finish to a great and memorable era. Mr. Barker not only knows whereof he writes (he was third mate on *Tusitala*), he writes exceedingly well. Here is all the excitement of sail handling in a gale, all the dullness of the doldrums. Not the least interesting are the relationships between the men, especially that of the author with the captain, his own father.

Tusitala was a big (2900 tons) Scottish-built, iron vessel, launched in 1883. Originally named *Inveruglas,* she was later christened *Sierra Lucena* and *Sophie* before receiving the Samoan name meaning 'teller of tales' in honor of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Leaving New York in May 1928, they sailed via Panama and Honolulu to Seattle, back to the canal and then on to Baltimore and New York.

Following thirty days in the doldrums after leaving the Panama Canal, the old sailors received the captain's permission to catch a shark. Hauling in a twelve-footer, its tail was nailed to the mast. 'The wind will come,' said an old Scandinavian sailor. 'You'll see.' And it did.

In Honolulu an exuberant young sailor named Dobbs performed on the main royal yard, stark naked except for a stovepipe hat, for the edification of a rapidly gathering group of people on the pier.

The only word-slip noticed is the author's constant use of 'nor'east.' All old sailors on the northern Atlantic seaboard say 'nor'west,' which Barker also does, but no'theast—soft. 'Nor'east' is not heard on this part of the coast except from those who don't know any better. Possibly it is an editor's alteration. This is but a small quibble on an excellent book.

REGINALD B. HEGARTY and PHILIP F. PURRINGTON, Compilers, *Returns of Whaling Vessels Sailing from American Ports. A Continuation of Alexander Starbuck's 'History of the American Whale Fishery,' 1876-1928* (New Bedford: Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, 1959). 11¼" x 8¾", vi, 58 pages. $6.00.

A century ago the whaling industry began to decline as, first, petroleum was discovered, and, second, as the basic tool of the trade, the vessels were destroyed by war. In inverse proportion to the decline of the trade, historical interest in it rose. By 1878 the first comprehensive history of whaling was published: Alexander Starbuck's *History of the American Whale Fishery . . . to 1876*. Starbuck came from an old whaling family on Nantucket. He knew the business at first hand and within the period included has provided the basic material for all subsequent books on the subject. Among other things Starbuck gave as complete a list as possible of all known American whaling voyages up to 1876. A few voyages he missed (the percentage is low) and in a few instances he made errors (percentage again low). But for another half century whaling continued from American ports and for these voyages there has been no guide comparable to Starbuck.

This gap has now been filled, and fittingly by another whaling son. Reginald Hegarty is the youngest man to ever sign on for a voyage. His father was master of *Alice Knowles* of New Bedford and, to the day she capsized in a hurricane off Hatteras returning from a successful voyage, had spent his entire life a-whaling. Mr. Hegarty has continued Starbuck's list of voyages from 1876 down to the end of whaling under sail in 1928. To these he has added all the missing voyages and corrected the errors he has found in Starbuck. Mr. Philip Purrington, curator of the 'Whaling Museum' (as we all call the Old Dartmouth Historical Society at New Bedford) has provided valuable lists of Hawaiian and San Francisco whalers, thus rounding out the voyage history of the trade. Starbuck's tabular form has been followed and other tables give the annual average prices of sperm and whale oils and have the quantities imported from 1876 through 1932. The tables are printed on single pages, therefore much more legible than the two-page arrangement of Starbuck, and the index is alphabetical, not the geographical confusion concocted for the predecessor.

EDWARD WEBER ALLEN, *The Vanishing Frenchman: The Mysterious Disappearance of LaPérouse* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959). 6" x 8½", cloth. 321 pages, 25 illustrations. $3.75.

This is an unusual book on an extremely interesting subject. The great French Admiral LaPérouse, is second in importance only to Captain James Cook in the history of Pacific exploration. The literature on Captain Cook is enormous, but comparatively little has appeared in English about the notable French navigator.

LaPérouse served with distinction in the French Navy and in 1782 sailed into Hudson Bay and captured Fort York and Fort Prince of Wales. Three years later he was given command of the French Government expedition to the Pacific. He explored parts of the northwest coast, the Pacific islands, and Asia, but after a visit to Australia his ships *Boussole* and *Astrolabe* vanished. Their wreckage was found in 1826 by Captain Peter Dillon on Vanikaro Island north of the New Hebrides. In 1828 Dumont d'Urville, on another French exploring expedition, erected a monument on the spot.

According to the dust jacket, this book claims to be 'the most complete biography of LaPérouse ever written in the English language' and in the sense that it contains an enormous amount of facts about the explorer's life, it probably is. But the entire book is written in the form of a series of improbable conversations between a group of shipmates on a United States Forestry Service vessel. This not only makes it difficult to get at the facts, but in a book of this length becomes very trying to the reader. It may appeal to those who like their history watered, but those who like it straight will wish the author had presented his vast knowledge on the subject in a more orthodox form.

RICHARD H. DILLON, *Embarcadero* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1959). 5¾" x 8½", cloth. 313 pages, 15 illustrations. $4.75.

Mr. Dillon, who is head librarian of the Sutro Library in San Francisco, has put together a baker's dozen of true stories. Each of the yarns has a San Francisco connection, hence the title taken from the famous central waterfront street of that port. The stories include Bernard Gilboy's voyage alone in his eighteen-foot sailboat *Pacific* from San Francisco to Australia; a sketch of the infamous Pacific pirate Bully Hayes; the mutinous voyage of Captain Bully Waterman in the clipper ship *Challenge*; the Scot, Benjamin Boyd, who may have been eaten by cannibals in Guadalcanal; an account of Chinese and Japanese junks blown, carried by currents, or sailed to the west coast, and others. Some of the tales are well known but others are not, and all deserve the telling in which the author has done an effective job.

GORDON NEWELL, *Paddlewheel Pirate: The Life and Adventures of Captain Ned Wakeman* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959). 5½" x 8¼", cloth. 248 pages. $3.95.

Captain Edgar Wakeman of Westport, Connecticut, acquired a degree of notoriety in the mid-nineteenth century by taking a Hudson River side-wheeler from New York down the Atlantic coast through the Strait of Magellan and up the Pacific coast to San Francisco. This extraordinary piece of seamanship earned him an enviable reputation as a mariner, which he lived up to the rest of his life.

Mr. Newell has written a workmanlike and entertaining book about Captain Wakeman's extraordinary voyage with the side-wheeler *New World*, and his later voyages in both sail and steam on the high seas and inland waterways. Wakeman's rough and adventurous life took its toll and he returned to his home town at fifty-seven, a crippled man and died shortly thereafter. He was outstanding among the many seafaring New Englanders who migrated to the west coast during the tumultuous days of the mid-nineteenth century.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ROBERT N. BAVIER, JR., *The New Yacht Racing Rules* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959). 6¼" x 9½", cloth. 143 pages, 8 plates, 37 figures. $3.95.

MARK M. BOATNER III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: David McKay). 5¾" x 8⅝", cloth. 974 pages, maps. $15.00.

An invaluable and timely reference work which contains some 2,000 biographical sketches, in addition to battles, military organizations and topics of every kind connected with this great conflict. A handy book to own with all the anniversaries in the offing.

EDNA AND FRANK BRADLOW, *Here Comes the Alabama: The Career of a Confederate Raider* (Cape Town and Amsterdam: A. A. Balkema, 1958). 5" x 6¼", cloth. 128 pages, 16 illustrations. 15s.

ARNOLD EILOART AND PETER ELSTOB, *The Flight of the Small World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959). 5¾" x 8½", cloth. 255 pages, 33 illustrations. $4.50.

An account of a 2,700-mile balloon voyage, first in the air and then in the boat-gondola from the Canary Islands to Barbados.

EDMUND GILLIGAN, *My Earth, My Sea* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959). 5¾" x 8½", cloth. 351 pages. $4.50.

A novel set in the seagoing world of Gloucester, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Labrador.

A. C. HARDY AND ADLARD COLES, *Merchant Ships, World Built 1958*, vol. VII (New York: John de Graff, 1959). 9" x 6", cloth. 258 pages, illustrations. $7.00.

A fact-packed, useful annual, lavishly illustrated with photographs and plans of all ships over 1,000 tons built in 1958.

FRANK KNIGHT, *A Guide to Ocean Navigation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1959). 5¾" x 8¾", cloth. 177 pages, 38 figures. $4.25.

P. J. RUSSELL, *Sea Signalling Simplified* (Southampton, England: Adlard Coles Ltd., n.d.). 4⅞" x 7¼", paper. 64 pages, 6 figures. Colored plate. $1.25.

MILES SMEETON, *Once is Enough* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959). 5¾" x 8½", cloth. 205 pages, 16 plates. $3.95.

HENRY T. ULASEK AND MARION JOHNSON, Compilers *Records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York* (The National Archives: Washington, D. C., 1959). Preliminary Inventories, Number 16, 8" x 10½", paper. 68 pages.

Contains lists of numerous Admiralty court papers including log books of prizes, and papers relating to the U. S. Frigates *Essex*, *United States*, and other vessels.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF

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[Seal]

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